

Kenkyo, Kenjitsu o Motto ni Ikite Orimasu

Arc 5: High School – Third Year

by Hiyoko no kēki

[Novel Updates](#)

Translator: [Oniichanyamete](#)

Epub: [Trollo WN/LN EPUB](#)

## Chapter 209

Today Oniisama and I were going to a French restaurant for some duck.

It was a little late, but this was his White Day present to me.

Apparently the reason he had been so busy recently was because he was given responsibility for a major project.

He really had come back late every day, and even when he was home I often caught him in front of his PC.

It was rough being an adult, wasn't it.

Anyway, since things were finally easing up on that end, tonight he was taking me to the dinner he had promised me.

It was the first time in a while that he had taken me out to eat. So happy.

I put a bit more care than usual into my curls tonight.

My dress was a new favourite as well.

With Oniisama escorting me, I felt like a princess~!

"Sorry that this took so long."

"Please do not be! I know how busy you are with work, so please do not mind it."

Beyond the candlelight, Oniisama smiled kindly in response.

"I do hope that you are not pushing yourself too hard though," I said. "You must take care of your health, Oniisama."

"Thanks. It's just that this project had to succeed. Everyone knows I'm going to take over the company. If I didn't get some achievements on my own, they'd look down on me for being a useless rich kid. I'm hoping that with this I've changed their minds across the board."

"My!"

You're so admirable, Oniisama!

Not just coasting on the fruits of your family, but working hard to make everybody accept you.

That was my prided Oniisama for you!

“I really respect you, Oniisama! As your younger sister I could scarcely be more proud!” I said with a clenched fist.

“You’re exaggerating,” he laughed between sips of wine.

“How is it, Oniisama? The wine today,” I clarified.

“I think you’d like it. It’s not too strong.”

Since he liked it, I had the sommelier take the label off for me.

I was collecting the labels of wines that my family enjoyed.

If my family hadn’t fallen into destitution by the time I was 20, I was planning on trying every one of them.

Oniisama said that the company was going well, so happy days of chugging expensive wines were soon to come.

My past life experience with alcohol was more or less limited to the sour I had at an izakaya.

That’s why I was *really* looking forward to this.

I wasn’t the best drunk in my last life, but I was pretty sure it would be fine this time around!

Hmm, but wow.

Mr. Duck was pretty delicious.

I opened wide for another bite.

“By the way, Reika, how have you and Kaburagi Masaya-kun been recently?”

Guhoh!

The duck was stuck in my throat!

I couldn’t do anything shameful in a place like this, so I tried my best to swallow it.

“Are you okay, Reika?”

“...Yes, Oniisama.”

As expected of Oniisama.

Cutting to the chase just as his opponent was about to inhale.

That shook me up.

His interrogation tactics were top notch.

“Even if you say ‘recently’, nothing in particular has changed...”

“Really? But at the flower-viewing party the two of you were pretty close, right?”

So he noticed...

But we were mostly definitely *not* close!

“We do speak to each other, yes, but neither do we particularly like nor dislike each other,” I explained.

I didn’t have anything to feel guilty about, but it still felt a little awkward.

I pretended to concentrate on the food and avoided looking at him.

“I see,” he said. “Then what about Shuusuke-kun from the Enjou family?”

Guheh-!

“...Same as the above.”

Give me a break...

I want to talk about Enjou even less...

“He had a pretty girl with him that night. Do you know her?”

“I have heard that she is a relative of the Enjou family...”

“Oh? A relative, huh?”

Oniisama gave a meaningful smile.

Eh? What now...?

“Ah well, if anything happens, you let me know, alright?”

“Yes, Oniisama,” I nodded obediently.

“I’ve been pretty worried recently. You’re hiding so many things from me now.”

“Eh...!?”

I looked up in shock to find Oniisama smiling happily at me.

Oniisama, just how much do you already know...?

\*

\*

\*

Today was Buddha’s Birthday.

At the temple I placed hydrangeas by the Buddha statue.

Lord Buddha.

I am a pious, and diligent buddhist.

Unlike the masses who are influenced by Western culture, I have never celebrated such heathen events as Christmas or Valentine’s Day.

Today on your birthday, I have come to pay my respects to you.

Please, grant me a dreamy romance!

And also a peaceful year at school!

\*

\*

\*

There was an class trip scheduled for 3rd years later on.

That’s why it was a big deal who ended up in your new classes.

When I nervously checked the class roster myself, somehow I managed to get both Serika-chan and Kikuno-chan in my class this year!

I don’t think this had happened since primary school!

“We’re in the same class, Reika-sama!”

“The three of us are going to have a great year!”

“I’m so happy! Please keep looking after me this year!”

We were all overjoyed.

Could this be the power of Lord Buddha at work!?

“But it’s a shame that Kaburagi-sama and Enjou-sama are in different classes this year, isn’t it~” Serika-chan said regretfully.

Kaburagi, Enjou, me, and Fellow Stalking Horse.

All of us were in different classes.

Maybe this was a deliberate move from the school with the power balance in mind.

It was going to be a rough class trip for whoever was in Kaburagi or Enjou’s classes, so I was really very lucky.

Could this be the power of Lord Buddha at work as well!?

Anyway, I ended up as class rep again.

It was pretty much custom by now, so I just stayed silent and accepted it.

My partner was Satomi-kun from my class in 1st Year.

I was pretty happy about that.

Since I already knew what kind of person he was, the job had just gotten easier.

“I’ll be in your care, Kisshouin-san,” he said.

“Likewise,” I replied.

There was one other person of note in my class.

Sitting in the classroom, looking towards us like he had seen the Four Horsemen, was Tagaki-kun.

In the end, Tagaki-kun had been terrified of me the entire Spring Holiday cram course.

I headed over to give him an extra gentle hello.

With Serika-chan and Kikuno-chan, the three of us surrounded the seated Tagaki-kun at his desk.

“Tagaki-kun, I have been entrusted with the role of class representative this year. I trust that you will cooperate with me, no?”

Hmm?

The plan was to speak to him kindly, so why did it come out like I was threatening him?

Um, Tagaki-kun’s complexion had turned from ashen to deathly white.

Serika-chan, Kikuno-chan, maybe if you could stop asking him ‘Capisce?’

Tagaki-kun, don’t cry?

\*

\*

After the opening ceremony finished, I headed to the Pivoine salon.

Greeting the new 1st years was one of the reasons, but another was a message I received last night from Kaburagi.

‘Went to the library with her today, but had an incident. Details tomorrow, so come to the salon!’

Ahhh geeez~

I guess I was stuck going along with his romance consultations again...

Going back to the message though, Kaburagi had always been the type to immediately put my suggestions to action.

Would I call this being willing to learn, or being an idiot?

When I reached the salon, Kaburagi was already waiting for me.

# Chapter 210

*Yang Yuhuan , often known as Yang Guifei (literally: “Imperial Consort Yang”), was known as one of the Four Beauties of ancient China. Yang was known for having a full and voluptuous figure, which was a much sought-after quality at the time. She was often compared and contrasted with Empress Zhao Feiyan, the wife of Emperor Cheng of Han, because Yang was known for her full build while Empress Zhao was slender.*

*Lychee was a favorite fruit for Yang Guifei, and the emperor had the fruit, which was only grown in southern China, delivered by the imperial courier’s fast horses, whose riders would take shifts day and night in a Pony Express-like manner, to the capital.*

*Also Aoyama is a rich people place.*

---

The new middle school 1st years had their first tea party with us today.

As the president, Kaburagi gave a brief greeting, before the new faces began introducing themselves.

After that we all just had desserts while chatting about our spring breaks.

Speaking of the dessert, it was ispahan macarons today.





The rose, and raspberry, and lychees came together like the dreams of a maiden made manifest.

It was one of my favourite desserts.

Aah! It was so precious and cute that I could hardly bear to eat it.

Truly, a dessert fit for I, the Rococo Queen!

Mmhu!

I was sitting in my usual seat on my own and enjoying the dessert.

Of course, that was when my unworthy new disciple traipsed along.

“I’ll report what happened first.”

Not even a ‘hello’?

Well whatever.

Hm!?

Oi, disciple, you're going to sit next to your master without invitation?

What is the meaning of this?!

"Coro was a girl."

I know.

Aah~

The tartness of these raspberries was to die for.

And they looked as lovely as they tasted.

Raspberries were the best.

"Oi, are you listening?"

"I certainly am. Please continue at your leisure."

And lychees brought to mind Yang Guifei, didn't they~?

I didn't think I liked them as much as she did though.

She liked them enough to have them brought over the Silk Road, after all~

If I was Yang Guifei, I wonder which food would be my equivalent to lychees.

"I mentioned her friend Gorou-chan to her, just like you said. She laughed and said that it was Coro-chan, not Gorou-chan."

I think I like cherries.

I wish it was cherry season already.

"She's a girl, and Coro is her nickname. What a false alarm."

But when you're eating cherries, it's a bit scary, isn't it?

There's that old wives' tale about swallowing seeds and appendicitis.

I know it's fake, but it's still a bit nervewracking, isn't it~

"Oi."

"I am listening. She is a girl, and Coro is her nickname, you said. And then?"

Kaburagi looked at me in dissatisfaction for a while, but he said "Just listen,"

in defeat and continued.

“On the last day of spring break, I invited Takamichi to the library.”

“I see.”

I discreetly surveyed the room.

Somebody was playing the piano right now, and nobody was in our immediate surroundings.

Given how quiet he was being, I probably didn't need to worry.

“Apparently she'd been going there to study almost every day of the holiday. Since that was the case, I casually suggested we go together.”

“Well good for you, then.”

“It was, up til that point.”

Kaburagi's expression turned bitter from reminiscence.

“When we arrived at the library that she recommended, of all people Mizusaki was there!”

“Mizusaki-kun!?” I exclaimed.

“Yeah. He was surprised to see us too. But it turns out that he was the one who told her about the place to begin with. And that's not all! Apparently the two of them had already studied together a bunch of times!”

“Aahh~”

Wakaba-chan *did* mention something like that.

“Well what happened then?” I asked.

“The three of us studied together. Aside from a short break at the café there, the rest was just studying. That wasn't a date; that was a study group!”

“My~”

“To be honest I was planning on inviting her to dinner after that, but when it was closing time for the library she said she had to help out around the house and that was it. I didn't even have a chance to ask her.”

“Dinner, is it? Did you not arrange it with her beforehand?”

“Yeah, I guess I didn’t.”

What on earth was he doing?

“I mentioned last time that you should be asking her what her plans are first. Where were you planning on taking her, anyhow?”

“A French place in Aoyama.”

“Are you a dumbass!?”

“Aah!?”

Oh!

I accidentally voiced what I was thinking.

“You. Just now you called me a dumbass, didn’t you?” he accused me angrily.

Oh dear...

“Heavens, no! I asked if it was Le Café Dumas. You must have misheard me,” I insisted.

He was still looking at me in suspicion, so I continued the conversation to distract him.

“You know, Kaburagi-sama, if you suddenly invite a girl to dinner at a French restaurant then she is more likely to be troubled than glad.”

“How come?” he asked, clueless.

This guy really was a dumbass...

“Some casual restaurant would be a different story. But a French restaurant, especially a high class one at Aoyama? Suddenly bringing her along in whatever she’s wearing is basically a form of torture. A girl wants to look her best when she visits a place like that!”

Looking fashionable is a girl’s weapon and armour, you know!

And choosing her outfit in anticipation is just part of the enjoyment.

To be taken there in your casual clothes...

And worse than just lunch, it was dinner.

Looking at all the gorgeously dressed adults around you, and then looking back at yourself.

Would any girl want to stay there?

“It’s not a place with a dress code, you know. I go there in casual dress all the time.”

Your casual clothes blow the casual clothes of a normal high school girl out of the water, you know!

Plus, even if someone like Kaburagi wore rougher clothing, the natural grace would still shine through.

Far from being criticised, girls would squeal over how unpretentious and dreamy he was.

An Emperor like him couldn’t understand the feelings of a commoner.

“You really do not understand...” I sighed.

Kaburagi was peeved.

“What don’t I understand?” he demanded.

“Anything...”

For the sake of Wakaba-chan, I realised I’d have to give it to him straight.

“The way you are going about it is just going to cause her trouble! You have neglected a number of things to begin with. That you need to set a time and date with her beforehand. That you need to explain to her what exactly you even plan to be doing. That you need to respect that she has her own life and schedule. If that is not clear enough, then for example, you should have invited her to a place she would normally visit on her own if you were planning on casually inviting her. If you really wanted to bring her to a fancy French restaurant, then at least let her know in advance!”

Kaburagi stared at me wide-eyed.

I was familiar with what Wakaba-chan liked to wear.

Her casual outfits were cute, normal clothing that you’d find with any regular high school girl.

If she was heading to a library a bit further away, then maybe something just a little more stylish.

Being suddenly dragged to a French restaurant while she still had her bag full of textbooks would just trouble her.

Kaburagi sunk into thought.

He stood there, looking like he was solving a difficult problem for a while, but eventually he nodded.

“I get it. From now on I’ll do my best to accomodate for her.”

Oh!

He gave in!

Was this the power of love!?

\*

\*

\*

“Kisshouin, what is love?” he whispered to me.

It was the next day, and we had just happened to pass each other in the hallway.

“Hah?”

“What is love, Kisshouin?”

What was this guy on about?

‘What is love’?

Was this some koan now?

Love, love...

Oh. Right...

“A star, enshrouded in mist.”

“Good answer,” he nodded.

Satisfied that I had the correct answer, he walked off.

Annoying...

I wasn't sure I'd be able to stand it if he was going to drop these stupid pop quizzes in the future.

I had to quickly find an elegant solution to deal with that poem anthology, or else...

---

*The poem above was probably translated wrong into Japanese.*

*Du fragst mich, Kind, was Liebe ist?*

*Ein stern in einem Haufen Mist.*

*You ask me, child, what is love?*

*A star mired in dung.*

*I guess they thought Mist was the same as in English.*

---

## Chapter 211

It hadn't been that long since the school year began, but the class reps were already having meetings to prepare for the excursion.

Speaking of which, we would be going to London, Paris, and then Rome in May.

We were going to be spending 3 days in each.

Usually the first was scheduled sightseeing, the second was free time, and the third was used for travel to the next city.

Quite a packed schedule.

I wonder why they even picked May for it.

The new 1st years were looking for a club to join, so I had my duties as the President of the Handicrafts Club as well.

I grumbled as much to Satomi-kun as we headed to the meeting room.

"But I'm glad I'm doing this with you, Kisshouin-san. Some people really cut loose during the excursion, but they'll all listen to you. I'm counting on you, Kisshouin-san."

So he said, but in 1st Year he did quite a good job himself.

And he wasn't one of those dead serious types, so he had the flexibility for it too.

I'll be counting on *you*, Satomi-kun.

When we arrived, the other class reps, and members from the Student Council were already waiting.

Oh, it was Class Rep.

When our eyes met I gave him a small wave, which Class Rep and Miharu-chan next to him returned with a smile.

This year Class Rep wasn't in my class anymore, but managed to make it into Miharu-chan's class. The two of them were the class representatives for it.



Not only that but he had taken my advice on the White Day present.

During the spring holidays the two of them went with Iwamuro-kun and Nonose-san to an amusement park together.

Class Rep had told me all about it in his and Iwamuro-kun's first report since school began.

"Thank you, Kisshouin-san!" he had said. "As expected of my master! You see, the four of us went on all sorts of rides but since I was a bit scared about going on the rollercoasters, Honda-san tried to cheer me up while I was depressed about it. Geez, I really don't have any face left as a guy~ But when I actually did ride them, they weren't as scary as I expected. Just a day wasn't enough to try all the rides, so the four of us agreed to go there again, and..."

The four of them basically had a double date, didn't they.

So jealous...!

Group dating was what spring was all about!

I wanted to try going on a double date to an amusement park too!

In the end I just listened to the two of them talk fondly about the girls, before they handed over a cute set of sweets as both souvenirs and thanks.

Mn, thanks for that. It was delicious.

Anyhow, right now Class Rep and Miharu-chan were happily chatting as they looked over the printouts for the class trip.

Maybe they were planning on spending time together during the second day of the trip.

Unuu, weren't they enjoying a little too much romance?

Had I blessed them too much?

While they were off enjoying themselves, their master was the chief of the Forever Alone village.

Weren't disciples supposed to be a bit more considerate of their masters...?

No, no, a master was supposed to be happy for their disciples.

They were members of the Fulfilling Romance village now; a village separated from mine by a large river...

Although this meeting was mostly to get the class reps familiar with each other, we still discussed group and room allocations, as well as what to look out for during the second day's free time.

Although the groups and rooms were basically split within the class, during the second day you were free to join your friends in other classes, so special care had to be taken to avoid any trouble.

The class reps from Kaburagi and Enjou's classes already looked a little exhausted.

Free time was going to mean a flood of girls about them, after all.

Good luck...

\*

\*

Anyway, what most of my grade were discussing these days was the class trip.

"Where are you going during the second day?"

"Paris is going to mean shopping, of course. There are handbags that haven't made it to Japan yet."

"I was thinking of getting some shoes. Although handbags would also be nice. Got a shop in mind?"

"Let's watch a musical at Piccadilly Circus!"



“That sounds amazing! In that case, the Phantom of the Opera would be nice. I saw it in London with my family once, and it was great.”

“I think I’d like to see Les Misérables.”

“Isn’t that a bit dark...?”

“What about a ballet then?”

“I want to watch an opera in Rome!”

Musicals, ballets, and opera?

If we’re watching a ballet I’d like to see Le Corsaire.

And maybe buy some nice stamps for my secret hobby.

Maybe I could buy some at the Vatican City and send some air mail to my friends and family.

But what if I got back to Japan before the letters did?

Changing topics, Moriyama-san from cram school had gotten together with her boyfriend during her class trip.

You do hear a lot of stories about new couples forming on these.

Maybe I'd have a dreamy encounter as well...

\*

\*

I was wondering where Wakaba-chan would be going during the class trip, so I gave her a call.

“The British Museum, hands down! I want to see the cat mummies! I want to see the Rosetta stone! And best of all, the admission is *free*! What a big-hearted country! Hmm, aside from that though, I want to try gelato at the Piazza di Spagna!”



It was going to be her first trip overseas, so no wonder she was excited.

“Unfortunately, eating at the Piazza di Spagna might be forbidden...”

“Ehh!?”

Wakaba-chan seemed crestfallen, but you could still see the plaza from the gelato stores nearby.

“Oh yeah! Since you warned me about getting the passport in advanced, all the paperwork went smoothly. Thank you!”

“You are very welcome.”

Since I had been to the three cities before, Wakaba-chan listened fervently as I told her my impressions of them for a while.

“By the way...” I began, before asking her if she made much progress studying at the library.

“Yeah, I did. It was pretty quiet~ Made it easy to concentrate.”

“I am glad to hear that. So you went by yourself?”

“More or less. I did go a few times with Mizusaki-kun though. Oh, and once with Kaburagi-kun as well.”

“My. With Kaburagi-sama?”

“Yeah. Kaburagi-kun suggested we go to a library to study. He didn’t seem to be familiar with any, so we went to the place that Mizusaki-kun told me about. When we got there, Mizusaki-kun was coincidentally there as well, so the three of us found a place to study together.”

“I see~”

That lined up perfectly with what I heard from Kaburagi.

The moment when he was thrust from Heaven into Hell.

“Did the three of you have fun?”

“Well, not so much fun, but it did help with our studies. Mizusaki-kun showed us the questions from his cram school, and Kaburagi-kun told us which textbooks he was using.”

That really wasn’t a date but a study group.

The pitiful Kaburagi.

“Anyways, more importantly we going to make teppanyaki with a hot plate at my house. Wanna join us?”

“Eh!? I do, I do!”

After that we worked out a time.

Teppanyaki~!

## Chapter 212

Although the class trip had made me a busy class rep, I wasn't neglecting my duties at the Handicrafts Club either.

It was around the time that new students really began to visit the clubs.

Last year I had just become an official member, so I had gone a bit overboard.

But as the president, this year I was going to show proper restraint and secure as many members as possible.

We needed more boys like Minami-kun!

We sat there, chatting relaxedly about it as we knit.

This place was so soothing~

It would be nice to just chat and knit, without worrying about my troubles ever again~

The world of humans was filled with complications.

Wakaba-chan and Kaburagi weren't in the same class anymore. But in 3rd year, we had even more electives, which was why they did have a few classes together.

Still, the fact that they were separated at all was, and I quote, "Disappointing to the extreme...!" and so to make up for it he would use schoolwork as an excuse to speak to her whenever possible, both before and after class.

Wakaba-chan being Wakaba-chan was more than happy to discuss schoolwork, and so from the outside at least, their relationship seemed to be going swimmingly.

I had been hoping that the Spring Holiday would be enough to cool down the rumours and ill-will towards Wakaba-chan, but from the way Kaburagi was behaving I couldn't see the jealousy dying down.

I was beginning to consider telling him to get his act together and stop talking to her.

He really needed to start thinking about how his behaviour was affecting her. But they were already in different classes.

On top of that, Wakaba-chan was always busy with the Student Council after school, and it wasn't easy for him to find an excuse to see her on the weekends.

Given all of that, the periods between classes was one of his only chances to talk to her.

He was holding back as much as any boy in love could.

And I'd be lying if I said I didn't understand...

An ordinary boy would never have to worry about what others thought about who he crushed on.

How much he spoke to her, and how often he spent time with her was his business, and his alone.

Kaburagi was already limited in that respect. If I told him, 'You should just give up on her,' it would be really too heartless.

He was an idiot, yes, but he was sincere about her.

Something else that the Spring Break hadn't helped were the rumours around Enjou.

The new year had begun with rampant rumours about how at the Kaburagi Flower-viewing party, Enjou and Yuiko-san had been spotted intimately linking arms.

The origin were probably the few Zui'ran students who had been invited.

Enjou blew off any questioning with "She's just a relative," but it was hard to see the two as anything but an intimate couple.

There wasn't the sense of them being family at all, was there?

Which was why I was questioned a lot as well.

'Is it true that Enjou-sama was cuddling a beautiful girl?'

'Is it true that the girl was the same one who came to the School Festival?'

All I could say in response was a harmless, "I *did* spot him together with a girl,



but I really do not know much more.”

Either way, they weren’t going to get anything if they were expecting gossip from me~

‘Reika-sama, could you ask Enjou-sama how he feels about that girl?’

As if!

At any rate, Zui’ran was buzzing with rumours about Kaburagi and Enjou. Business as usual.

Getting used to Third Year, dealing with the class trip, and on top of that being tossed about by the romances of total strangers.

The Handicrafts Club was truly a bastion for my weary heart.

Here I could knit away, forgetting about the troubles of the outside world.

I wish I could rest here forever~

But the cause of my troubles had messaged me with another summons today.

Tsk.

There went my plans of avoiding the salon and staying here all afternoon.

Even if I ignored this message, another would just arrive five minutes from now...

This was basically as bothersome as it got.

I was beginning to entertain the thoughts of dropping my phone into water again...

\*

\*

“You’re late,” he said.

I go out of my way to come here, and that’s the first thing you say to me?

Just how self-centred could this guy get?

I was irritated, so I decided to lecture him a bit.

“Kaburagi-sama. It pains my heart to say this, but I too have plans. I cannot

always throw everything away for your convenience. I, too, will be keeping a close eye on any further harassment of Takamichi-san, but for your own romantic troubles you need to put in the effort yourself first. Please only contact me when you need advice. Can you agree to that?”

Kaburagi looked at me wide-eyed.

“Got it...”

His one redeeming quality was that he earnestly took your advice.

“As long as you understand. Well then, what did you wish to speak about?”

“...I don’t know how Takamichi feels.”

We were using a small classroom again, so there was no need to worry about being overheard.

“Well, even if you ask *me*...”

“How do you... How do you think I can get her attention...?” our cool and talented Emperor hesitantly asked.

Honestly, you would expect a line like that to come from a lovesick maiden instead.

“I *have* suggested this before, but why not simply confess?” I asked.

“Like I said, it’s too early for that!”

I might have imagined it, but I think he was blushing.

“But you want to know how she feels, and you want her to have some awareness of you as a potential boyfriend. Would confessing not be a simply way of accomplishing both?”

“But... But I want the situation to be perfect when I confess to her. I still haven’t prepared everything!”

What, was he thinking of doing it on a classroom after school, or in a park during the evening or something?

“Situation? For example?”

“...Like, for example I’d have a few dozen fireworks blooming in the sky, or

maybe I could use skywriting to confess in the sky.”

“Ehh!? Those are for *proposing*, damnit! You’re going to go *that* far for a confession!?” I blurted.

The shock was so crazy that I forgot to watch my tone.

But seriously, *skywriting*!?

Like getting a plane to write ‘I love you’ in the sky, right!?

What was wrong with this guy!?

“It’s important. I want her to remember it,” he said without a shred of self-doubt.

“Whoa, whoa, I really, *really* suggest that you reconsider. While I shant deny that there are girls who are moved by that sort of thing, I doubt that Takamichi numbers among them. Far from it I could even see her being creeped out by having that much money spent confessing to her.”

“Really?”

“Yes, really!”

This was the same girl who was gobsmacked just from being given an expensive uniform.

It was hard enough for her to empathise with my sense of money.

Even if she hypothetically had feelings for him, seeing him spend a few million yen on a confession would be a sure-fire way to disillusion her.

“Then what if I fill her whole house with roses to symbolise just how much I love her? Romantic, right?”

“On top of having no place to stand, it would be a pain for her to clean up afterwards. Just how many garbage bags do you think that would need?”

“You sound like a poor person.”

“I am being realistic.”

“Then what if I reserve a hall and have an orchestra play exclusively for her?”

“Again, please stop trying to impress her with money. Takamichi-san was

raised in a normal family, with a normal sense of money. The things you suggested just now are more liable to scare her off.”

“What’s ‘a normal sense of money’ even supposed to mean? Isn’t it more like you just don’t have a romantic bone in your body?”

“Absolutely false. At any rate, putting on an exaggerated performance like that would probably work with any other girl in Zui’ran, but Takamichi-san is different. She already knows how hard it is to make money. If you begin wasting your parents’ money left and right like that it would make her more guilty than happy. And being honest, your ideas were clichéd and tacky anyhow.”

“Aren’t you being a little harsh...?”

“It pained my heart to say it as well, but honest advice is the best way that for me to help you.”

“...Then what am I supposed to do then?”

“Why not simply tell her that you like her?”

“That’s too ordinary. I’d have to at least give her a ring with her birthstone or something.”

“Heavy...! You aren’t even dating yet! And what are you going to do with the ring if she rejects you!?”

“Saying that is bad luck, damnit! As for the ring... I’ll get rid of it. Maybe toss it into the ocean or something.”

“Uwa-! The type that Takamichi-san hates the most are people who don’t value their belongings, you know. And throwing it into the ocean...? Uupftpft...”

“You...”

“Apologies. Well, at any rate, going back to the matter of the ring for a moment, if something like that ever does happen then how about selling it off and donating the money to a charity? It is a very meaningful way of using your money.”

“I wonder if I picked the wrong person to talk to about this...”

Seriously though, a ring?

That sounds like a disaster in the making.

It becomes more apparent each time I talk to this guy just how little skill in romance he has.

“Girls like accessories, don’t they? Hmm... but come to think of it, I never did see her wear the presents I gave her.”

“Eh!? You gave her accessories as a present!? When!?”

And Wakaba-chan never mentioned it either!

“When did you give her such a thing?”

“At Christmas.”

“Christmas?”

I thought he got her a German-made teddybear for Christmas.

It was a bit on the expensive side for a normal girl, but you could say that it was a very sensible gift for Kaburagi.

It seems that I gave him too much credit.

“I gave her a teddybear.”

“Indeed.”

I know.

“So I put a diamond heart necklace around its neck.”

“*Haah!?*”

Was it wearing something like that!?

It was wearing cute Christmas clothing so I hadn’t noticed at all!

“The heart motif was filled with my feelings for her.”

“What are you doing before you have even confessed!?”

“And I thought she might be hesitant to accept a brand-name item, so it was custom made.”

“Who made it...?”

“I did.”

“By ‘I did’, you mean...?”

“I hand made it. I went to a workshop and used lost-wax casting to make it. I put all of my feelings into it.”

“*Heavy!* Even receiving a *hand-knit scarf* would be ten times less heavy than *that!*”

And more importantly...

“Do you think that perhaps she has not noticed the meaning behind it...?”

“Eh!?”

Maybe it was buried beneath the clothing, or perhaps she had taken it off to store elsewhere, but I hadn’t seen any necklace when Wakaba-chan showed it to me.

“No, no, she had to have noticed, right?”

“I wonder about that.”

The Takamichi siblings had all been shocked about the price of the bear.

If it had come with a necklace, they definitely would have mentioned it to me.

“...Don’t tell me that Takamichi really didn’t notice?”

“I cannot say. To begin with, why did you give them to her together like that?”

“To make it romantic.”

It’s just *confusing*, damnit!

If you want to put on a performance like that then you need to pick the right one for your partner!

“Still, a handmade accessory? How on earth did you come by that idea? I must applaud you for coming up with something like *that*.”

“What are you trying to say?”

“Nothing in particular.”

“Well, in one of Yurie’s favourite movies the guy proposed with a ring he made himself. Which was why each year I gave her an accessory that I made myself. I only started in middle school, but for the first year it was a necklace

with a lily motif, since her name is Yurie. The next year was lily designs, but for earrings instead. And when I was going to become a high schooler I thought to give her a lily-themed ring... but..."

Aah, but he was rejected before that.

I guess he must have been remembering the struggles of that year, because Kaburagi's expression turned dark.

"The centrepieces of the necklace and earrings had Yurie's birthstone. The ring was supposed to be both of our birthstones around a diamond..."

*Diamond?* That means it was an *engagement* ring, right!?

I wouldn't be surprised if the reason she suddenly rejected him was because she panicked after realising a ring was coming next.

Scaryyy.

Anyone would want to run away from that.

I was at a loss...

This guy was even more hopeless than I thought...

Perhaps this idiot was beyond my help...

## Chapter 213

Tired...

Kaburagi was so much worse than I expected that I was honestly at my wit's end.

After that, even after we returned to the salon, Kaburagi kept talking to me about his ideal confessions.

He was like a bottomless well of worthless ideas.

Naturally he never brought up Wakaba-chan's name, but anyway, all of his ideas were needlessly bombastic and unrealistic.

This wouldn't do.

In the end I concluded that I had to put off the confession for now.

What I needed to do first was teach the idiot some common sense.

Uwah, the road ahead was tough...

"Kisshouin-san, I hear that you've become Masaya's strategist?"

"Haah!?"

Since we were in public now, and I was more than a little sick of him, I had told Kaburagi to think about how to word his confession first.

Having given him his homework, I shooed him off and helped myself to some tea, but this time a smiling Enjou had come to accost me.

"What in heaven's name are you talking about?"

"Hm? I heard it from Masaya. Apparently he employed you as his strategist."

What the hell!? Doesn't that make me his subordinate then!

I've never heard of a disciple this arrogant!

"That position seems much too important for one such as I. You are Kaburagi-sama's closest friend. This role can only be entrusted to you."

"Oh no, I could never..." he waved me off.



Hmph.

That's not something I want to hear from a member of the Fulfilling Romance village like you.

You've got plenty of experience. Can't you just use some of it to give him advice?

"Do you know what it is Kaburagi-sama is asking my advice on?" I asked.

"Yeah, more or less," he said, sending a glance Kaburagi's way.

The boy in question was sitting cross-legged by the window, quietly reading a book.

No doubt it was another stupid love poem anthology.

I could already see him sending weird quotes my way...

While I was thinking that to myself, I heard dreamy sighs from here and there.

They could only react that way because they didn't know what a loser he was inside.

"In that case," I started again, "would it not make even more sense for you to advise him?"

"Why do you say that?"

Because you've got a goddamned girlfriend!

To begin with, I wasn't even close to Kaburagi.

Shouldn't Enjou have been considered for the role before any thoughts came *my way*?

Ah, hang on.

I guess it was because of Iwamuro-kun and Class Rep...

"I think a girl's opinion would be a lot more useful than mine," he smiled brightly. "Kisshouin-san, I'll leave Masaya to you."

\*

\*

\*

Even though I had an urna on my forehead, why was this year full of trouble?

Aaah~

What a pain.

While I pondered this on a particularly lazy Saturday, I suddenly received a message from my fellow Pivoine member, Fuyuko-sama.

‘Might we meet for a chat? It would be lovely if we had a chance to better know each other, Reika-sama.’

Being overjoyed at the chance to meet a friend outside of school, I agreed without another thought.

Fuyuko-sama had always been in my group.

Moreover, she was even a member of the Pivoine like I was.

Despite all that though, we never really had a chance to really know each other.

I guess it was because we were on different frequencies.

She really gave off the vibe of an ancient noble.

But maybe today was my chance!

She was inviting me out on a weekend after all.

What if I was about to make a new friend!?

I arrived at our meeting place full of anticipation; a lounge in some hotel.

It wasn't long before I spotted her, as well as an older woman I didn't know sitting next to her.

Hm?

Was this her oneesama?

I made my way towards them.

“Fuyuko-sama.”

“Reika-sama!” she exclaimed. “Thank you so much for coming! Please, take a

seat!”

“Why, thank you,” I replied.

I sat down opposite the two of them and ordered a herb tea.

“...Umm, so, regarding our meeting today...”

“Ah, of course! You see, I very much wanted a chance to get to speak with you.”

...I see.

I mean, I was happy to hear that, but in that case what was the strange lady for?

I had a closer look at her.

She was wearing a suit, and seemed to be about 25, but she didn’t have make up on and looked like your everyday woman.

At least, she didn’t look like she was related to Fuyuko-sama.

Seriously, who was this?

I was slightly regretting coming here.

“I’ve noticed recently that you seemed a little threadbare. It’s been on mind for a while now,” she told me.

“Haah, I see.”

“Indeed. Reika-sama, has something been bothering you?” she asked.

“Bothering me...?” I asked. “I would not say so, no...”

“Goodness, haven’t you been having a lot of trouble with Kaburagi-sama and that commoner girl? And you’ve been speaking with him in the salon too. A lot of girls were envying you, but not me. You never looked happy to me.”

“I see...”

She was normally so quiet.

It was rare to see her so animated.

“Umm, at any rate, might I ask who this miss is...?”

“Oh, of course! This is Lady Lyuleiah! A greater *healer*!”

Hah?

Hiilah?

What was a hiilah?

Hira?

I looked at her suit.

As in short for “hira’sha’in(rank and file worker)”?

“*Healer*, as in the English word. A healer refers to a person with the ability sooth and cure. They can use their powers to heal the body and soul!”

“Pleased to meet you. I am Healer Lyuleiah.”

I gave her another once over.

This woman who didn’t seem to have a drop of foreign blood in her was apparently named Lyuleiah.

“...That is quite an unusual name.”

“It is my Healer name. It was bestowed upon me by the Virtues of the Second Sphere when they commanded me to heal and guide the people.”

“Haah...”

She handed me a violet business card.

‘Blessed by the Virtues.

Greater Healer.

Ryu-Rei-A (Dragon Spirit Love)’

Apparently her name was supposed to be Japanese.

“Lady Lyuleiah saved my heart during a rough time in my life. Since then, I have been guided by her teachings,” Fuyuko-sama told me.

“Ah, excuse me,” I called out to nearby waitress. “I would like to order your special for today, the 3-cake sampler.”

There was something really alluring about the idea of trying 3 different little

cakes.

“...And lately you seemed to be having a rough time, Reika-sama, which was why I really wanted to introduce Lady Lyuleiah to you.”

Hmm~

For a while I listened to her confusing explanation, but since I never showed much interest, eventually the greater healer glared at me.

“You have been possessed by a fox spirit,” Lyuleiah concluded.

“Oh goodness! This is horrible, Reika-sama!” Fuyuko-sama exclaimed.

“I see...” I replied blandly.

So here it was.

And a fox, huh?

Honestly, at this point I didn’t care anymore.

“Unless we promptly exorcise you, your future will contain dark omens and even greater misfortune...” Lyuleiah warned me ominously.

“There is no need for that,” I said bluntly. “After all, the spirit that plagues me is not a fox, but a tanuki.”

“Huh?”

“The curse that ails me is the curse of the tanuki pup. It is a terrible curse that tanukifies your stomach if you so much as let your guard down. And the worst news is that this curse cannot be broken.”

“Reika-sama, what are you saying...?”

“However, I have grown fond of this tanuki, and am prepared to have him with me for life. Annoying perhaps, but quite cute once you get used to him. For this reason, I must decline your exorcism. Dark omens will be crushed, misfortunes conquered, should they ever impede my path.”

Having finished up the cakes and herb tea, I gave a confident,

“Well then, gokigen’yoh.”

And promptly took my leave.

I had thought Fuyuko-sama was somebody who lived in another world, untouched by our common troubles, but it turned out that she was actually one of *those* types...

Geez...

When I returned home, the evil tanuki spirit was lying in wait with tarts of this season's fruit in order to curse me.

Eei!

Your dark magic tempts me not!

## Chapter 214

Today was teppanyaki day at Wakaba-chan's house.

I had some high-grade beef with me as a present.

What do you mean I just wanted to eat it?

"Takamichi-san, please have this meat. If it pleases you, shall we all try some later on?"

"Ehh!? You even brought us high quality meat!? That's so nice~ Wah, so heavy. Thanks!"

"No, no~"

Uhuhuhu, teppanyaki, teppanyaki~

Cooking on a hotplate is teppanyaki~

"Please come in, Kisshouin-san."

"Please excuse me~"

I followed her into the living room where her siblings were already waiting.

"Welcome, Coro-chan!"

"So you're finally here, Coronet!"

"Welcome."

"Hello, everybody. Thank you for having me," I said.

I was basically established as 'Coro-chan' by now Kanta-kun was standing in the kitchen and making something.

"Kisshouin-san, take a seat?" asked Wakaba-chan. "Is barley tea okay?"

"Yes, thank you. Kanta-kun, what is that you are making?" I asked.

"Milk pudding. You'll get some too, don't worry," he replied offhandedly.

"My, how delightful!" I exclaimed. "*Thank you*, Kanta-kun! Shall I help?"

"No. You just sit there," he said.

“Okay,” I obeyed.

Kanta-kun’s manner of speaking was a little rude, but he was actually a much nicer kid than he let on.

Huh? What do you mean I’m being influenced by food?

I sipped at the barley tea that Wakaba-chan gave me and just rested for a bit.

Haah~

It was relaxing here.

But there was actually something I planned to ask the next time I came here.

Naturally it was regarding that necklace.

From what I understood, it had been around the teddybear’s neck.

I was scared to ask, but now that I knew about it I had no choice but to do so.

While Wakaba-chan was talking about her studies since the beginning of the school year, I very casually brought it up.

“Say, Takamichi-san? I do recall that Kaburagi-sama gave you a rather cute teddybear, no? It would be nice if I could have another look at it.”

“Eh? Oh, sure.”

Suspecting nothing, Wakaba-chan went to her room to retrieve it.

“Here you go.”

“Thank you.”

Just like I recalled, there was no necklace around its neck.

I stealthily shifted its collar just to make sure.

Nothing.

“It’s really cute, isn’t it? I was pretty shocked to hear the price though,” she laughed.

“Its round eyes are rather adorable,” I said, as I casually patted it down for any sign of metal.

Nothing.



“...Because it was a limited Christmas special it came with a rather festive cape. But other Christmas bears held presents, or came with other accessories. Did this one not come with any?”

“Nothing at all!”

Ehh!?

Then where on earth had Kaburagi’s overly heavy present gone!?

I looked and touched it all over, in every nook and cranny.

Nothing!

“You seem awfully interested in that teddybear, Kisshouin-san,” commented Wakaba-chan.

“Eh? Ah, well, I do have an interest in handicrafts after all, so I was thinking of making one myself sometime. Sorry for being strange,” I apologised.

I guess I was acting a bit too suspiciously.

“Ohh, not at all,” she said. “I’d forgotten that you were with the Handicrafts Club. Don’t mind me. Look as much as you want.”

“Thank you... Say, is this a girl? Girl teddybears often come with accessories, no?”

“They do, don’t they. Hmm, I guess the cape *is* a bit girlish.”

“Right...? So nothing else came with her? No accessories or the like...?”

“Accessories? I don’t *think* so...”

“I see...”

But just as I had given up, and handed the teddybear back to her...

“Ah! I remember now. She came with a necklace.”

“Eh!? She did!?”

So there *was* one!

“Yeah. This cute heart-shaped necklace. I’d forgotten that it had come with it.”

“Where is it!?” I exclaimed.

“My sister has it.”

“Natsumi-chan!?”

Why with her!?

“Yeah. My sister really liked it. She’s at that age when you’re starting to want to dress up, right? But I thought real accessories were too soon for a primary schooler, so I gave her that toy necklace instead.”

“...”

Oh my god, Kaburagi...

“Might I see that necklace...?”

“Eh? Sure, I guess. Then let me go call Nacchan! Nachaaan!”

What do I do, Kaburagi?

The price of the necklace, the meaning behind it, Wakaba-chan didn’t notice a thing.

Her little sister came out with the necklace.

“Here you go.”



It was a platinum necklace, with an open heart pavé diamond pendant.

“It doesn’t look like a toy at all, right?”

Natsumi-chan, that's because it isn't a toy...

"You'd never think that it came with a toy."

Wakaba-chan, that's because the toy came with *it*...

I looked over the necklace in my hand.

When he said he had handmade it I had expecting something a bit less professionally shaped, but apparently Kaburagi was stupidly good with his hands.

I could literally see this in a shop.

You must have really tried, Kaburagi...

I guess all those presents to Yurie-sama must have paid off after the years.

When I spotted the little 'M&W' on the back, I began crying inside for Kaburagi.

This necklace was filled with all of his weighty feelings inside.

Kaburagi had toiled in a workshop to make it.

But after seeing Natsumi-chan wearing it so happily, I just couldn't bring myself to tell the truth.

She really seemed to love it, after all...

Mn.

I saw nothing, today.

See not, hear not, speak not...

Ah, but I ought to at least make sure she didn't lose it or throw it away because she thought it was a toy...

"Natsumi-chan? This necklace came as part of a Christmas special, so this accessory is actually well-made enough that people can wear it. Take care of it, all right?"

"Ehh!? I had no idea! Did you hear that Nacchan? Treat it well, okay?"

"Yeah!"

I was going to forget all about it.

That Kaburagi had designed it while thinking of her, that he had painstakingly crafted it while thinking of her, that he had attached it to the bear and anxiously wondered about her response, I was going to forget all about it.

Unnoticed by the innocently smiling sisters, I silently wiped away the tears in my heart.

## Chapter 215

*TPO is a Japanese abbreviation of 'time, place, occasion'. It's used in the sense of 'There's a time, place, and occasion for everything'.*

---

I forgot about that tragic present for now.

After returning to the living room I ate the tasty milk pudding that Kanta-kun made while Wakaba-chan and I spoke about the school trip.

She seemed to be quite excited for it, having bought a location guide book and everything.

"I'm so excited. This is my first time going overseas, you know? Hey, Kisshouin-san, did you ever see the changing of the guards?"

"I did. I watched with my own eyes as guards with these huuuuge hats marched down the street."

"I'm so jealous! I wanna see it too!"

Her siblings joined in and we happily chatted together about good tourist spots as they looked through the guide.

When it was about time that we began preparing dinner, Wakaba-chan's mother came back.

"Welcome, Coro-chan!" she greeted me.

"Thank you for having me here today," I said.

Wakaba-chan handed my present over.

"Mum, look at what Kisshouin-san got us."

"My, thank you! Gosh, what good meat!"

Wakaba-chan got up to help her mother in the kitchen while Kanta-kun and I set up the table and brought out the hot plates.

We were using two of them since her family was quite large.

I liked being able to help like this.

It felt like I wasn't just some guest that they still had reservations against.

Maybe I counted as one of them~? Ehehe.

"Hey, Cornet. At Zui'ran you greet each other with 'gokigen'yoh', right? How come you don't say 'gokigen'yoh' then?" he wondered.

"TPO," I answered.

If I came here and said that, I'd look pretentious.

Life is all about adapting yourself.

But then the twins wanted to hear me act like an ojousama instead.

"Coro-chan, say 'gokigen'yoh' for us~?"

"Do an 'ohoho'."

So they really *did* think of me as an 'ohoho'...

The Ohoho Cornet Girl...

I had better pay attention to the way I laughed while I was with them.

By the time Wakaba-chan's father had come back from work, the cooking was about to begin.

Wakaba-chan, Kanta-kun, and I were using one hot plate together.

"Holy shit!" he exclaimed. "There's a lot of meat today."

"Coro-chan brought it over," explained his mum. "The meat on this plate is the good stuff, so try some later."

"You did good, Cornet!" he laughed.

Their family seemed to be enjoying the meat I brought.

Thanks to that, I was able to eat with fewer reservations.

Mmmmm, food was somehow better when eaten with lots of people like this.

Aaah~ This ponzu sauce was great!

It was a bit nostalgic.

In my old life too, we used a hotplate like this to have yakiniku.

Seeing the normal family in front of me, I couldn't help but relax and accidentally said "Wakaba-chan" a few times, before hurriedly correcting myself.

Sometimes I just slipped up.

Wakaba-chan didn't seem to mind though.

I wondered if that meant I could call her that at school too, then...

After having my fill I had to go home.

The Takamichi house was accepting and comfortable so I would have liked to stay, but I had my own curfew and had to hurry.

When I left they gave me some cake to bring back home.

"Sorry that it's only leftovers."

Then Wakaba-chan's father drove me to the train station.

There was nothing more I could want from them.

When I got off the car, Wakaba-chan and her dad waved goodbye and saw me off.

"See you tomorrow!"

I waved back.

Aah, that was fun.

I wanted to visit again already.

While I sat on the train I wrote Wakaba-chan a thank you message.

\*

\*

\*

Since Otousama and Okaasama were out at a party tonight, nobody asked me where I had gone.

I had just made it in time for my curfew, and only Oniisama was there.

"Welcome back, Reika."

“I am home, Oniisama.”

Oniisama gave a sniff.

“You smell like cooked meat,” he said.

Oh gosh!

To the bath it is!

After washing my hair carefully with some fragrant shampoo, I changed into some home clothing and brought the cake out into the living room.

“Oniisama, I have some cake. Have some with me?”

“Thanks, I will.”

After making some tea, I took a seat next to Oniisama and began eating the strawberry shortcake.

“Say, Oniisama? What kind of friends do you mostly have?”

“Friends? Hmm, I guess the majority of them are ones I made as a student. After joining the workforce most of my relationships became tied to my job, so it’s hard to call them true friends, I guess.”

“I see. Then by student days, you mean from Zui’ran?”

“You could say that. Hmm, besides them, also some people I knew from other schools, or people I hit it off with while travelling. Different sorts.”

“I see... Oniisama? Are any of your friends from normal households?”

“By normal households, you mean people from the normal working class?”

“Well, yes...”

Oniisama looked at me for a while, before he eventually replied.

“...I do. After I became a high schooler, I made some External friends, and I have a lot of friends like that from university as well.”

“I see...” I muttered to myself.

Having finished eating, I put down my fork and sank into thought.

Oniisama seemed to realise something and patted my head.



“Reika. Don’t worry about how our parents think. Don’t worry about where they come from. If you think they’re worth it, then be with them,” he told me.

“Yeah...”

I hoped that one day I could introduce Oniisama to Wakaba-chan.

\*

\*

\*

I was a bit worried about meeting Fuyuko-sama the next Monday, but she didn’t really say anything different to me.

Phew, thank goodness...

Hopefully nobody would find out about the things the tanuki spirit had made me do during the weekend.

Still, the person I was even more awkward about meeting was Kaburagi.

At first I had just considered his romance somebody else’s problem, but having seen what happened to the fruits of his efforts with my own eyes, I just couldn’t help but sympathise with him now.

Thanks to that, it was hard to treat his issues as flippantly as I used to.

God, seeing that necklace was sorrow itself.

If I left that guy alone, he was just going to produce tragedy after tragedy for himself, mark my words.

And the one who’d end up watching every step would be me.

Which was bad, because eventually I’d cry.

Like, seriously bawl.

I mean that necklace was bad enough.

Just how long did he spend making that?

I’d never done anything like that myself, so I didn’t know how tough it was, but it had to be like when a girl knit a scarf for her crush.

Well, leaving aside how much heavier the jewellery was, at least...

For my own ease of heart, I was going to have to be a bit kinder to him during our discussions.

## Chapter 216

*By the way, did you know that the name of the school that Reika attends is actually read as Zui'ran?*

*Due to historical reasons I ended up imitating this one facet of the first translator's translation. Originally I was translating a few teasers like 70 chapters down from where he was translating, and for that reason took 'Zui'ran' as the translation.*

*This was despite ignoring all his other unique takes on translating names, which bothered me a lot more. (Enzo, Kishouin etc.)*

*When I began re-translating the series as a whole, I stuck to Zui'ran, figuring that it was already a point of familiarity, and by the time I reconsidered, I was already like 40~50 chapters in.*

*Recently, however, I went back and made edits to a large amount of Tilea's Worries chapters, so it's probably not as big a deal as I'm thinking.*

*If you'd like me to use the proper translation of the name (and replace it in all previous chapters), say so down in the comments. If you'd prefer Zui'ran just out of familiarity, please also let me know in the comments below. It doesn't bother me either way, personally.*

---

The Kaburagi Masaya from 'You Are My Dolce' was absolutely not this ridiculous emperor...

Handsome and sharp, they called him the Emperor of Zui'ran, and despite having a cold and unapproachable exterior, when it came to romance he was passionate and overbearing, earnest in the pursuit of the girl that he liked, even if he was a little clumsy at times.

Sometimes he didn't use enough words to clarify, which turned into misunderstandings, but those few moments of incompetence stirred up the maternal instincts in the readers.

Particularly heart-pounding was that scene by the ocean, alight with sea sparkles, where he held out his hand and said, "I'm sorry."

Waah~!

Anyway, he was basically all the attributes that young maidens found charming, rolled up into a single character.

And yet...

The Kaburagi Masaya I knew in reality was, yes, still handsome and sharp, and still called the Emperor of Zui'ran. And yes, I was not arguing that he had a cold and unapproachable exterior.

But the inside.

His mind was on the level of a primary schooler, unable to read the mood, and with a tendency towards stalking. The type of loser who would hand-make an accessory and then engrave their initials into it despite not even dating the girl or even securing her love.

This was just cruel.

Give me back the excitement from my previous life.

And the nickname 'Emperor' was supposed to be because he had the bearing and charisma of a ruler.

It wasn't supposed to be because he was the Napoleon of children's cavalry battle!

Unlike *this* laughingstock, the Emperor from the manga was dignified.

The difference was just too much...

Although I could admit that he did a good job of hiding it.

I had even begun to suspect that most people thought of him as the same sort of person as his manga counterpart.

Even *Wakaba-chan* said that he was mature.

Of course, his true self was *that*, though...

Life *sure* was convenient for hot guys!

Well, not that I really cared.

He could fail at romance as much as he wanted so long as he did it out of my

sight.

The problem was that now that I *did* know, it was only a matter of time before he made me bawl out of pity.

*Why* did I have to ask her about that necklace...?

It would have been better not to know.

Anyhow, ignorant of my inner thoughts, Kaburagi continued brainstorming his next plan for a present.

“I don’t know what women want,” he said helpfully. “What do *you* think they want?”

I was sitting in my usual spot in the salon when he had come over for another consultation.

Since by all appearances he was discussing something serious with me, everyone around us had given us space out of consideration. As long as there was no shouting, we wouldn’t be overheard.

“Your best bet are consumables or perishables,” I told him without hesitation.

Things like flowers or food were good because the receiving end didn’t have to think too hard about it.

Actually, food was *really* good.

You just ate it, and it was gone.

“*Perishables!?* No *way*. I want to leave behind some proof of my feelings. Something that she can always keep near, so that she can always keep my heart near.”

The man with the heart of a stalker, ladies and gentlemen.

Every one of his ideas gravitated towards heavy crap like that.

But I couldn’t just leave him be either.

If I did, I could almost guarantee that he’d come up with another insane present.

I had to course-correct before it was too late.

“I believe it would be best if you refrained from presents that are too expensive,” I said.

“Why,” he demanded.

“Because in consideration of her personality, she is more liable to feel guilt or discomfort from receiving a present bought with a mountain of your parents’ money. Being the case, would she not be much happier to receive a cheaper present bought with money you earned yourself?” I asked.

I was pretty much certain about that.

All I needed to do was think back to how she reacted when I handed over my expensive uniform, paid with my parents’ money, and without an inkling of how much they cost.

Wakaba-chan loved her parents, and on top of that she already knew how hard it was to make money.

“So you’re telling me to get a job, and buy a present with *that*?”

“Well, I suppose that *is* what this comes down to.”

Wasn’t it moving to receive a present that somebody worked hard to get you?

Still a bit heavy though...

Especially considering they weren’t even dating...

“I *do* have some money that I earnt myself, you know.”

“Eh!? Truly!? How?”

That came as a shock.

Zui’ran forbade its students from working part-time after all.

“Mostly investing.”

“Investing... Stock trading, in other words. Hmmm~ Making money through stocks...? Would that count as money you earned yourself, then...? Stocks... Wha-!? *Stocks!*?”

I did a double-take.

“Kaburagi-sama! Are you planning on buying all of our company’s stocks and

initiating a hostile takeover!? This is not what we agreed on!” I accused.

“Haah!? Why the hell would I do *that*!?” he yelled.

The noise caused everyone to glance our way for a moment but I was in no state to care.

Stocks!

Takeover!

*Destruction of my family!*

I retrieved the oath from my bag.

“Do you *dare* claim that you do not remember this!?” I demanded.

“Uwah...! Did you seriously go get that *laminated*!? You’re really creeping me out here...”

Did he really think that I wouldn’t?

With it laminated I’d never have to worry that Kaburagi’s oath would get dirty.

It would never be damaged by rain nor wear now.

But the oath by itself wasn’t enough to reassure me anymore.

Not now that Kaburagi was trading stocks.

“Kaburagi-sama. If you desire my help then I will require another written oath from you. With a proper blood seal this time!”

I had been right. A thumb print would never be enough.

I needed to carve the promise into his body.

“*Again* with the blood seals!? What the fuck is your family up to!?”

“Keep your voice down. What will you do if somebody hears you?”

“Is it fraud!? Don’t tell me you’re connected to the underworld!? Leave me out of this already...”

What the heck?

The company run by the Kisshouin didn’t have a single tie to anything shady.

We were 100% above the board.

“Look, I’m trading in stocks but I’m not making enough to take over any companies, okay...?”

“Truly?”

“Truly. With how little time I get to spend on it between studying, I barely make anything. Just how much money do you think you’d need to buy up the majority share in your family’s company?”

“So you *already* know exactly how much money is needed to forcefully take over our company then!” I accused, bearing down on him.

“Even if I knew, I wouldn’t and *couldn’t*!” he defended as he drew his body back.

He had better not be lying.

Lives were depending on this.

There was no place for lies here.

I stared at him a while before he averted his gaze.

“Just how fucked up *is* this company...?” he muttered.

How rude!

We’re 100% above the board!

But fine.

If he was willing to go that far, then I’d believe him.

For now.

At any rate, I’d be keeping a close eye on him.

It would also be best to confirm with Oniisama that we weren’t in a position to suffer a hostile takeover.

“I understand. I shall believe you. Well then, shall we return to our previous topic?”

“Yeah.”



Kaburagi sighed in relief.

I'm trusting in you, Kaburagi.

"Well then, in regards to the present, you can increase the chances of her accepting your gift by *making* them easy to accept. Foods, consumables, perishables. Besides, girls love to be given beautiful flowers, or charming little desserts. Leaving that aside, would it not feel like bribing her into dating you if you brought her expensive gifts every time?"

"That *is* true..." he nodded.

"You should save the expensive gifts for when it counts."

"Like Christmas. I wonder what happened to the handmade necklace I gave her..."

Wah! Please stop!

Don't make me remember that!

Your M&W necklace has been given to Wakaba-chan's little sister.

"...Well, forget about that for now. Ah, that reminds me. I think that that teddybear was a good idea. And the maple syrup from Canada too!"

Wakaba-chan had been pretty pleased with that maple syrup.

I thought it was pretty delicious too~

Could we find it in Japan?

"I see. Hm? How come you know that I gave her maple syrup?" he asked.

Eh!?

Had he never told me!?

Oh no!

"Oh? Did I not hear about it from you? Strange, I recall you telling me..."

I couldn't let him see my eyes.

They were the window to the soul, after all.

Instead, I pretended to examine the contents of my tea cup.

What, didn't you know? I'm well versed in tea leaf reading.

This kind of behaviour is totally natural for me.

"I really don't remember though..." he muttered.

His memory seemed to be stupidly good.

Don't tell me he remembered everything he ever told anyone?

As Kaburagi seemed to be going through our conversations in his head, I hurriedly interrupted him instead.

"That maple syrup was delicious, no? How was it? Her reaction?"

"...Yeah. She told me it was great when she thanked me," he said a bit happily. Maybe he was recalling the memory.

"See? That was a splendid brand that you chose!" I praised, hopefully buttering him up.

"It *was* pretty good. To be honest I wanted to get her something better than just maple syrup, but Shuusuke stopped me. He said that since I had already given that kind of Christmas present, a small souvenir would be just right."

"My!"

Nice save, Enjou!

"Enjou-sama has been giving you advice as well, then?"

"Sometimes."

I see.

"In that case would it not be better to seek advice from him rather than me?"

Come to think of it, wasn't that guy part of the Fulfilling Romance Village?

Kaburagi, that guy definitely has a lot of real experience, so you should go get your advice from him.

"Shuusuke told me that for romance it was better to get a girl's perspective."

"*What* did you say!?"

*Enjooooouuuuu!*

So all of my suffering right now was because of *you*!

That *bastard*!

He came up to me commenting about how he'd 'heard' that I was Kaburagi's strategist when *he* was the mastermind all along!

Baastard schemer!

Where *was* he right now!?

Don't tell me he went home!

Kiiih!

"So I was wondering who I could even ask," continued Kaburagi, "When Iwamuro and Class Rep told me to ask you."

Aah, Iwamuro-kun, Class Rep...

No, it wasn't their fault.

The one at fault was Enjou.

"If you wanted a female perspective, why not simply ask Yurie-sama or Aira-sama?"

"Those two are busy thinking about what they want to do in life, you know..."

This is my last year in high school too, you know?

Hmm?

He was looking oddly grumpy.

Could it be that he was sulking because Yurie-sama hadn't paid more attention to him?

Wakaba-chan, just what part of this guy is 'normally mature'?

"...Honestly. Those two told me about how your hair was a god of love, but I haven't seen a difference at all."

"That is because you lack faith."

Pray, ye faithless.

I raised my right hand into the Abhaya Mudra for bestowing courage, while

my left pointed downwards to form the Varada Mudra of fortune bestowal.



“Allow me to gift you with some advice from the divines. Push not your own preferences, and match the likes of the girl instead. If you do so, your path will surely become clearer.”

“So dodgy...”

*Dodgy!?*

If that’s the attitude you’re going to take, then forget about any fortune!

Hmph, Kaburagi wasn’t getting a drop of my romantic luck!

“Then in light of your deficits in both comprehension and imagination, allow me to give you something concrete instead. The thing that would make Takamichi-san the happiest is probably a reference book for her studies.”

“Haah!?”

As if preparing for uni entrance exams wasn’t enough, Wakaba-chan was also a scholarship student.

Those reference books were indispensable for her.

Plus, reference books and exercise books were both pretty expensive.

“What a cynical and unromantic present... I really *did* choose the wrong person.”

Shoulders slumped, Kaburagi walked away.

\*

\*

Kaburagi’s only redeeming factor was his obedience in learning though, so despite his parting words he still did as I said.

He came and told me that Wakaba-chan was overjoyed and thanked him.

And thanks to that, they even ended up agreeing on another visit to the library together.

“You’re pretty good, Kisshouin.”

Apparently I had gained his trust.

I didn’t *want* it!!!

## Chapter 217

Kaburagi was walking on clouds.

Ever since he gave Wakaba-chan those reference books and exercise books, the two of them would discuss difficult questions with each other.

“We’re competing to see how who can get further in the exercise books.”

Hmph.

Who was it that called it “cynical and unromantic”?

“That girl hates to lose, after all,” he said between smug sips of his tea.

“You are working hard together,” I praised.

See? Look at where my perfect advice got you.

By solving the exercise book together, the two of you have even more to talk about.

As expected of me.

“We talk on the phone or message each other about questions that we can’t solve.”

“You have her mail address!?” I asked in shock.

When did *that* happen!?

“Yeah. There was an accident during the summer, so I’ve had it since then.”

“I see...”

Don’t tell me he did the same thing to her as me, assaulting her with messages every five minutes if she didn’t reply?

That was horrid.

And scary too.

“...Sending too many messages may bother her, so please show some moderation.”

"I know. Even I know restraint," he declared rather proudly.

I didn't have much confidence in his idea of restraint though.

"Truly, now? Women despise men who will not give up, you know?"

"Yeah."

"If she does not reply to your email, you must not pester her, you know?"

"You're the one who won't give up! What kind of guy do you think I am!?"

A stalker-in-the-making?

Kaburagi huffed and turned away unhappily, so I decided to leave it at that for today.

This wasn't over.

I took a sip from my hibiscus tea. The faint tang was delicious.

"...We'll be going to the library, yeah?" he asked, seemingly over his bout of unhappiness.

"Yes, you did mention something like that."

"I was thinking of asking her out for a meal this time..."

I think last time he mentioned bringing her out to a French restaurant in Aoyama, didn't he?

"Please try not to bring her to anywhere too unapproachable."

"Unapproachable? Like, how unapproachable is unapproachable even?"

"Hmmm. Well, having dinner at a French restaurant certainly qualifies. If you are going for Italian, then go for somewhere informal like a café or a regular restaurant, not one of the expensive ones. I suppose if I had to add to that, go for a restaurant that is well lit."

"That's hard. Do I have to follow all those restrictions?"

Exactly what is hard about *that*?

What kind of restaurants do you usually go to, exactly?

"Last time I went with her to a restaurant, she didn't seem to mind that



much.”

“Eh!? When was this!?”

“During the summer.”

Again!?

“Was it dinner?”

“No, it was lunch that time. We stopped by after coming back from the hospital.”

“I see...”

Right. Back then he was taking her to the hospital every day.

“Where did you take her, incidentally?”

The restaurant that he named was an all-organic hidden French restaurant.  
*That* place, huh?

“Yurie liked it.”

“So Yurie-sama liked it...”

Hmm~

“So did you suddenly invite her too, that time?”

“Huh? Yeah. It was just about lunchtime so I suggested getting some food before taking her home. That restaurant allows last minute reservations after all.”

Suddenly his expression looked a bit awkward.

“But it’s not like she was wearing anything weird, alright!? And she said the food was good! And also it might have been French but it was a relatively casual place, okay!” he argued.

I guess he remembered what I said just now.

It sounded like excuses, actually. Also he was being loud.

How was he going to take responsibility if we were overheard?

Shhh!

“Casual, huh...?”

Well, I suppose it would be fine for lunch...

That place wasn't too fancy after all, and if Wakaba-chan knew she was meeting with Kaburagi then her clothing couldn't have been too bad either.

“I suppose that is fine then... But I had no idea you were so fond of French. You wanted to bring her to Aoyama for French food as well.”

“Ah, it's not like I really like it or anything, but Yurie liked it,” he said without an ounce of shame.

This idiot...

“Kaburagi-sama...”

“Huh?”

I slide to the side so that I was right in front of him now.

“Kaburagi-sama, please stop making all of your decisions based on Yurie-sama.”

“Hah?” he replied blankly.

Notice it already...

“Buying presents that Yurie-sama would like, taking her to restaurants that Yurie-sama would like, with cuisine that Yurie-sama would like. Everything you have done has been with Yurie-sama as a basis, with the assumption that if Yurie-sama would like it, Takamichi-san would as well.

“But the girl you like is supposed to be Takamichi-san, is it not? Then should you not be thinking about what kind of presents would make *her* happy, and what kind of food *she* might want to try?”

“That's...”

“Yurie-sama might indeed be fine about being suddenly taken to a fancy French dinner, and certainly her clothing would not be out of place. I can understand why you might not have thought too deeply about it because of that.

“But Takamichi-san is not Yurie-sama. An expensive French restaurant is not

somewhere that a normal high school girl often goes to,” I said, before looking at him straight in the eyes. “Who are you really looking at?”

Kaburagi’s eyes went wide.

...I mean, I didn’t entirely blame him.

Yurie-sama had been by his side since he could remember, and given his long crush on her it was natural that she had left a deep impression on him.

It didn’t help that he kept every other girl at arms length, either...

Still, it was just weird that he was using somebody else as the basis for his decisions with Wakaba-chan.

I was starting to feel sorry for her.

I looked back at Kaburagi, still silent and hanging his head.

Oh, was that too much of a shock?

Was he feeling depressed now?

Oh dear, maybe I went too far...

What now?

And wow, Kaburagi was surprisingly sensitive to these things.

“Ah, ummm... But at least you meant well, right? Mmn, I could tell.”

“...”

“Oh! I know! That maple syrup was a great choice, right?” I said hastily. “And that teddybear was a good idea too. I approve.”

His only response to my consolation was to mutter something quietly.

“Pardon? What was that?”

“...The maple syrup was Shuusuke’s idea, and the teddybear... was something that I picked because Yurie liked them...”

“Uwaahh...”

Far from consoling him, I just rubbed salt in the wound...

Oh geez, his head was hanging even lower now~

I know!

At times like this, what he really needed was somebody who understood him better than anyone else!

Now where was that best friend of his...?

Eh!? He wasn't here today!?

Useless!

I looked straight ahead as I sipped my hibiscus tea, trying not to look at the boy sitting with me.

After a long while, Kaburagi finally raised his head.

"...Got it."

Hm? What did he get?

"I need some time to think. Let's talk again tomorrow," he said before standing up.

Ah, was he going home now?

But...

"My apologies, but tomorrow I already have plans and cannot come to the salon."

Sorry... But I'm already going to Mao-chan's birthday party, you know~

Wah! Come on, don't blame me with your eyes like that~

What if I bring you some sweets from the party? Would you like that?

Eh? You don't want them?

Okay then.

\*

\*

\*

"Reika-oneesama! Welcome!"

"Gokigen'yoh, Mao-chan. Happy birthday."

She was wearing a white dress.

With Yuuri-kun in his little bowtie next to her, the two of them looked like a tiny bride and groom!

“You look adorable in that dress, Mao-chan. You just need a bouquet and you would be the spitting image of a bride.”

So I handed over a bouquet.

Mao-chan met Yuuri-kun’s eyes, looking both happy and shy.

Mmmn, it’s spring.

Since the primary school section finished classes before the high school section did, the party had already begun.

By now all the kids in the Petit Pivoine were familiar with me, and they came in turns to say hello to me.

So cute~

So soothing~

Haah~

Today was stressful since I was worried Kaburagi would summon me.

But he didn’t say anything in particular, and from what I saw he seemed normal, so I supposed that I was safe for now.

I took a seat next to Mao-chan and handed over her present.

“Reika-oneesama, did you come straight from school?” she asked.

“Yes. Please do excuse me for coming in my uniform,” I smiled.

“No, I’m just really happy that you came,” she told me.

For her birthday, I got Mao-chan a Swarovski pendant.

Girls loved sparkly things.

Wakaba-chan’s little sister was a good example of that.

So was the time when Imari-sama bought Mao-chan that glass hair ornament, so I hoped she’d like my present too.

“Wah, it’s so cute! Thank you so much! Can I wear it now?”

“Please do.”

I’m so glad that she liked it!

Putting it on, she turned to Yuuri-kun and asked, “How do I look?”

“It really suits you, Mao,” he smiled in return.

Wow. I think maybe even a primary schooler had better skills in romance than Kaburagi...

When Mao-chan’s mother came over to thank me for the present, she encouraged me to try some of the cooking, so I began to help myself.

Most of what was presented to day was cooked by her mother.

As expected of her~

Mmm, this chicken in boiled tomatoes was really good!

“I actually wanted Akimi-san to come too, but since we only just met I wasn’t sure if she would be happy to get an invitation,” Mao-chan told me.

“Ah, I see.”

Mao-chan had taken a liking to Akimi-san ever she came over that time during the spring holidays.

“I’m really excited. She’s going to teach me how to bake bread next time! Haruto-niisama loves bread, and they talked for ages the other day about which bakeries were good.”

“I see...”

“Akimi-san said that she loves freshly-baked raisin bread. Haruto-niisama went and bought some to try afterwards, and he said that it was delicious too.”

“My...”

“He said that Akimi-san really liked sweet things. Should we go together sometime? Me, and you, and Akimi-san, and Haruto-niisama, and Yuuri!”

“Mao-chan...”

“Yes?”

“...Could it be that you are trying to pair Akimi-san with Ichinokura-sama?”

“Uhuhu.”

I knew it.

She *had* seemed rather forceful in insisting that Akimi-san go home with them that day.

“Ichinokura-san is already officially dating somebody, is he not?”

That beautiful model of a girlfriend.

“Apparently they haven’t been meeting much, recently.”

“Truly!?”

“Yes. So now is my chance...” she smirked.

Oh my god!

When did my pure little Mao-chan learn to smile so evilly like this?

“If I could choose, I would have actually preferred *you* to marry him, but...”

“Ehh!?”

“I gave up on that, though. After all, you already have somebody as dreamy as Imari-sama, and at school you have the Emperor and Yukino-kun’s oniisama as well, right? Haruto-niisama would have just too many rivals.”

Hmm?

Um, I think I just heard some names that I couldn’t ignore...

“Ummm, Mao-chan, are you perhaps having a terrible misunderstanding about something?”

“Don’t worry! Instead, you’ll help me with Akimi-san, won’t you? Won’t you, Reika-oneesama?”

Ugh!

How could anybody refuse those adorable puppy eyes of yours?

When she grows up, Mao-chan is going to have all the men wrapped around her finger, isn’t she...

Good luck, Yuuri-kun!



## Chapter 218

I was happily digging into the salmon marinade when I felt someone poke me in the back.

“Reika-oneesan.”

“Yukino-kun!”

It was Yukino-kun, ever the picture of a smiling angel.

It’s been a while, Yukino-kun~!

I had been busy recently so I hadn’t turned up to the Petit. Thanks to that we hadn’t seen each other at all.

“May I sit next to you?” he asked.

“By all means,” I said. “Have you been well?”

“Yes,” he said, politely taking a seat. “But it’s been lonely without you around...”

Guhaah!

W-What power!

Are *all* the kids in the Petit Pivoine such little heartbreakers!?

Uuu, I want to headpat so badly!

“I have missed you too, Yukino-kun!” I exclaimed with all sincerity.

Yukino-kun flashed a bright smile in response.

Guooh!

I-I was having a nosebleed in my mind...!

“Have you been busy?” he asked.

“Yes, quite so.”

With the new semester starting, there was work as class rep, dealing with new visitors to the club, dealing with my troublesome disciples’ love problems,

honestly I had my hands full.

And there was one *particularly* troublesome disciple that really ate into my time...

“How is being in Year 2, Yukino-kun?”

“Hmmm, I’m not sure yet. But I made new friends in my class.”

“Goodness, what wonderful news. What kind of people are they?”

“One of them really likes stars. I like stargazing too, so we talk about stars together.”

“My, I had no idea.”

Yukino-kun and the glittering stars in space. It suited him so well! He was like the Little Prince!

“I look at them through my telescope sometimes. When there was a meteor shower I couldn’t help myself and secretly got up to watch them, even though they told me not to.”

“Goodness, staying up late is bad for your health, you know? You did not catch a cold, did you? Hopefully not an asthma attack?”

“Huhu, it was fine. Niisama found out even though I was in my room, so he brought me some hot chocolate.”

“My!”

So even that blackguard could do something good once in a while.

“And then we watched the meteor shower together but I accidentally fell asleep. When I woke up in the morning I was in bed,” he laughed shyly.

Sooo cute!

After that I chatted with Yukino-kun some more, and then had some fun with the other kids too.

Unfortunately, the time seemed to pass in a flash, and before I knew it it was time for the kids to go home, meaning that it was time for me to leave as well.

That was when Yukino-kun suddenly tugged at my sleeve.

“Hey, Reika-oneesan? Why don’t you let us drop you home?”

“Eh!?”

Uh, that’s a bit...

I mean, I already have a car waiting for me, and even if I didn’t I could still get home on my own...

Getting driven home in the *Enjou* family car is...

“We haven’t met in ages. I want to talk some more! Can’t you...?”

“Guh...!”

How could I say no to such an adorable request...!?

I had really missed him as well. But...

Uuu, come on, don’t look at me like that, Yukino-kun...

I can’t say no to those puppy eyes...

“Hmmmm.... Then perhaps I will...”

“Yay!”

I folded.

There was no going against this angel’s adorable eyes.

I guess I’d just have them drop me off, and then give the Enjou family a proper thank you some time later.

“Yukino-kun, your car is here.”

“Okaaay.”

He led me by the hand as the two of us headed to the entrance.

Waiting there was Enjou...

I groaned in reflex.

He went out of his way to pick up his brother?

I was surprised he had the time for that.

“Good evening, Kisshouin-san.”

“Gokigen’you, Enjou-sama...”

It was getting dark now, but under the streetlights his hair seemed to glitter, making his smiling self seem even more princely than usual.

“Niisama, Reika-oneesan’s going to get driven home with us!”

“Eh?”

“Ah, I mean... Yukino-kun, perhaps this is not such a...”

“Reika-oneesan?”

Uooooah!

His cherubic expression seemed to be asking me, ‘You promised, right?’

How could I say anything now~!?

“Reika-oneesan?”

“Aah~ Y-Yes.”

While I struggled to recompose myself, Enjou seemed to have grasped the situation.

“Oh, I see. Then get on. Is your house okay?”

“...Yes, that would be perfect, thank you.”

And that’s how I ended up getting driven home in their car.

In the back seat was, in order, me, Yukino-kun, and then Enjou.

The moment I stepped into the car, I noticed a pleasantly sweet fragrance.

“Have fun at the birthday party?” Enjou asked him.

“Yeah,” he replied, before turning to me. Yukino-kun pointed out the window. “You can’t quite see Spica yet. But the sky isn’t cloudy today, so we’ll be able to see the Spring Triangle.”

“Are you two talking about stars?”

“Yes. Yukino-kun is actually quite studied.”

“Yeah. But it’s a problem because he stays up late all the time.”

Yukino-kun pouted.

“Not *every* night.”

“When we went to Karuizawa during the spring holidays, you stayed up all night and couldn’t get up in the morning,” Enjou pointed out.

“But that was because the air was really clear, so the stars were extra pretty...”

My, my.

Looking for an ally, Yukino-kun tugged at my arm.

“You can even see stars that are invisible from Tokyo,” he reasoned.

Okay, okay, I understand, Yukino-kun.

It’s clearer without all the light pollution, right?

Unable to help myself, I gave him a pat on the head.

Whoaaaaa, his hair is so soft~

Yukino-kun smiled in embarrassment.

“Say, Reika-oneesan! Why not have dinner with us before you go?”

“Ehh!?”

Where did *this* come from, Yukino-kun?

“Dinner?” I asked.

“Yeah. I’d love to have dinner with you and Niisama.” He looked at the two of us in turn. “It’s okay, right?”

“Eh, but I just ate at Mao-chan’s house...”

And I *really ate*, so I wasn’t hungry at all.

“But...”

“Come on, Yukino. Don’t be so selfish,” Enjou said chidingly, as he placed a hand on Yukino’s head.

Uuu~

I was feeling guilty now.

What was I to do...?

Yukino-kun, don't look so down.

And damn you, Enjou, weren't your words too harsh?

Yukino-kun...

I continued calling out for him to cheer up in my head, but it was to no avail.

I looked over the top of Yukino-kun as he hung his head, and found Enjou giving me a troubled smile.

What now?

"Kisshouin-san, are you free after this?"

"Eh?"

"I'm sorry, but would you be willing to go along with my brother for a little while? If you're okay with heading to a café for a little, then..."

"Ahh... Yes, that would be fine."

Yukino-kun immediately beamed at my affirmative response.

"Really!?"

"Yes."

"Wah! Yay! Thank you, Reika-oneesan!"

\*

\*

\*

The three of us entered a café attached to a restaurant.

Since I was already here, it would be better to order something a bit different from what I usually drank.

Oh my, and there was quite a selection of cakes too...

You mustn't, Reika!

The curse of the tanuki was flaring up again...!

"I think I shall have the lavender tea."

“Darjeeling for me, then.”

Done with our orders, Yukino-kun and I began looking through the cakes in the menu.

I started thinking about who to bring here next time so that we could share a cake set.

“You seem rather fond of desserts, Yukino-kun,” I realised.

“Yes. But Niisama doesn’t.”

Breaking his silence, Enjou nodded and said “No, I don’t,” before returning to his tea.

“Do you dislike sweet things?” I asked.

“I don’t exactly hate them, but I guess I don’t go out of my way to eat them,” he explained.

Come to think of it, while I often spotted Kaburagi eating sweets at the salon, I couldn’t recall many times I’d seen Enjou doing the same.

Even for those few times that he did, they were small portions.

“It’s so good.” I turned back to Yukino-kun.

“It really is,” he agreed.

Enjou could only give us a helpless smile.

“By the way, I hear that you’ve been giving Kaburagi some good advice. Like suggesting reference books as a good present for a girl. Only you could come up with that, Kisshouin-san. Although it’s such a utilitarian gift that you’d never suspect it was supposed to be romantic.”

Ugh! Were we really doing this *now*?!

Enjou was even giving me a meaningful smirk!

Besides, if he knew about it then shouldn’t he have known about the thing from yesterday too!?

“...Did Kaburagi say something today?”

“Whatever do you mean?”

For example, did he say that I had been cruel to him, or that I had hurt him?

Ah!

Or what if he said something like, 'Never have I been treated with such disrespect! This won't go unpunished.'!?

"He didn't say anything in particular."

"I see."

What the heck.

He seemed to receive quite the blow so I thought that he'd still be hung up over it, but maybe I was overthinking things.

Thank goodness~

"But he did seem oddly quiet today."

"Eh...!?"

I knew it...!

Was he still depressed over it!?

Had he really been hurt that badly!?

I guess I went a bit too far.

I mean, it wasn't like he meant ill, it was just that he was a bit too much of a dumbass.

Hmmmm...

"What's this, what's this?"

Ah, now Yukino-kun seemed to be interested.

It hurt to see his innocent smile...

"Heh... You really are soft-hearted, Kisshouin-san. How about we get you some cake?"

"I am fine..."

What the heck.

If you think you can lift my mood by feeding me, you're in for something else,



buddy.

I wasn't so simple.

And besides, this was all his fault for going home early and leaving his best friend bereft!

Right, right, so this was actually Enjou's fault. Let's go with that.

In the end though, I wondered what kind of conclusion Kaburagi would come to.

I was scared of coming to school tomorrow.

What if he ended up obsessed with another poet?

It was going to end up as another curse on my luck in love...

"Reika-oneesan, is that tea any good?"

"I have to say that it is."

But to be honest... 30, 40 percent of the reason people even drank this stuff was for the pretenses, right?

"Could I try a sip?"

"Why of course. Help yourself."

I pushed the lavender tea in front of him and watched him excitedly take a sip.

Then I watched his face fall.

"How was it?" I asked.

"Ummm... Thank you very much." He pushed my cup back to me.

I guess it didn't suit his taste.

"Say, Reika-oneesan. Could you come over again to play?"

"Eh!?"

"I had a great time when you came over for my birthday. Could we play games together again?"

"Ahh..."

I'd prefer to pass on any visits to the Enjou family home, but since Yukino-kun was asking...

Ah, then couldn't I just visit him in the Petit salon instead?

Right, that was perfect.

"Games, huh?" Enjou suddenly said. "That was fun. Especially since Masaya was crushed."

Wow, despite his nonchalant tone, what he said was pretty brutal.

"By the end Masaya-niisama was drowning in debt wasn't he?"

"And he had a huge family, too. Picture it: Masaya pushing a pram while he's wearing a baby sling."

"Pfft!"

"Ahaha!"

I had to stifle a laugh.

I couldn't help it.

Just picturing that emperor waving a baby rattle in front of a baby he was carrying...

So mismatched!

"But it might actually suit him better than we think. When Yukino was just born, Masaya sometimes poked at him and made him cry, or picked him up out of the crib because he wanted to hold him, and caused everyone a lot of trouble in general."

"My, he did something like that?"

"Yeah. Actually, most of the time he was in my house he'd have Yukino sitting on his lap." At first Masaya almost dropped him a few times, but once he got the knack of it he seemed pretty at home with it. He even played lullabies on the piano for him. Not that Yukino ever fell asleep to that though."

"I don't remember that."

"Of course, you were a baby, Yukino."

Hmm~ So Kaburagi was fond of children.

Come to think of it, he played with the kids quite a bit at the Petit salon, or at Yukino-kun's birthday party."

It was surely because his mental age was close to theirs.

We continued happily talking about Yukino-kun's baby years when Enjou's phone rang.

When he looked at the screen, his smile disappeared.

When he looked back at us, it was time to go.

"It's about time that we went home."

"Ehhh~"

"It's getting late, Yukino."

"...Fine. Reika-oneesan, can we come here again?"

"Of course. Let us try the cakes next time," I said.

"Yeah!"

Holding his hand, I got in the car, and they dropped me home.

## Chapter 219

*Conbini, or Japanese convenience stores, are a lot more convenient than those elsewhere in the world.*

*From a wide selection of foods both hot and cold, to make-up or domestic goods, or even ATMs, they are closer to ubiquitous and fun-sized supermarkets than anything else.*

*Like, they are actually convenient. You could probably live on just conbini purchases for a month or two if you weren't too fussed about your health.*



*Famiresu, or Japanese family-friendly restaurants, are casual restaurant chains that provide a wide selection of cheap-ish but decent meals, somewhere between the pricing of fast food and a regular restaurant.*



“The truth is a bitter pill to swallow.”

That was the first thing Kaburagi said to me after calling me to the usual conference room.

“Pardon me?”

“What you said to me that day. They were too painful and harsh for me to accept on the spot.”

“I see...”

Well, he did seem to have suffered quite a blow.

I mean, I even started to feel a bit guilty about it.

Mentally, I was just a squishy blancmange, but perhaps Kaburagi wasn’t much better.



“But as much as I wanted to, I couldn’t in all honesty deny it... After a night of thinking about it, I was forced to accept that you were completely right. I’ll admit it. I’ve been using Yurie as the basis for my decisions.”

“I see...”

So he spent the whole night thinking in that state...?

I’m sorry.

Even though I was the one who said that to you, I was fast asleep around that time.

But I was really impressed that he managed to acknowledge his own faults.

That was his only good point for you; being earnest and honest.

“I’ve spent my whole life with Yurie... I haven’t ever looked at any girls besides her, so I don’t know anything about them. I think Aira might be the only exception, but the two of them have basically the same taste to begin with. That’s probably why.”

“Right.”

“Since Yurie liked it, Takamichi would probably like it too. That was the way I was thinking.”

“Yes...”

Kaburagi hung his face in shamed frustration for a moment, but quickly lifted his head.

“But Kisshouin.” He met my eyes with a serious gaze. “The one I love right now is without a doubt Takamichi.”

“...!”

Y-Yeah.

Even though it wasn’t me he was talking about, being stared at like that and hearing things like ‘the one I love’ was setting my heart off like a jackhammer.

In the end I had to avert my eyes in a panic.

That was too much stimulation for a person from the Forever Alone Village.

Guh, one day even I would have something like...!

“Kisshouin. She and I have completely different ideas of normal high school life, don’t we?”

“I believe so. She attended public schools until she entered high school. That upbringing is completely different to what a Pivoine member would experience.”

“So that’s how it is...” he nodded. “Then in that case, I’ll learn about her way of life and her way of thinking.”

“I certainly do not see why not.”

That was basically the first thing anybody did. Learning more about the person they liked, I mean.

“But there’s a problem.”

“Yes?”

“I have no idea what this ‘normal high school life’ is supposed to be to her.”

That’s where we had to begin?

I suppose it made sense.

He was His Majesty the Emperor, after all.

As if he had any idea where to even begin learning about the way a commoner lived.

Actually, I wondered how much he even knew about how regular people lived.

“Kaburagi-sama, have you ever been to a conbini?” I asked him tentatively.

“Don’t take me for an idiot.” He grew a little sullen. “I’ve obviously done at least that much.”

“Then have you ever been to a fast food joint?”

“Fast food? I’ve... never tried any...”

“What about a family restaurant?”

“...I haven’t.”

A sheltered rich boy, as expected.

Apparently the look I gave him had illustrated what I thought of that, because he suddenly snapped at me.

“What!” he demanded. “Have *you* ever been to one!?”

What was this guy saying? Of course I had.

Just who did he think he was talking to?

Reika’s Cheeseburger Rankings was a thing, you know.

Some people thought of ‘cheeseburgers’ as all the same, but the actual burger could vary wildly from shop to shop.





Otherwise I wouldn't have had to spend so many days in the field investigating.

"I've almost never eaten junk food."

I see.

Junk food is an old friend to most commoners, you know?

And standing in front of you is the Junk Food Queen!

"Weren't you raised pretty much the same way? How come you've been to those kinds of places before?"

"Because everything is valuable life experience," I answered.

Good joke, me.

The real reason was just because I liked them~

"Then Takamichi's been to eat fast food too?"

"I would certainly think so."

She didn't seem like the type to fastidiously avoid it, meaning that she probably did have it sometimes.

“Is that so. Alright then. In that case, please take me to a fast food joint right away!”

“Hah!? Right now!?”

“Yeah. Let’s strike while the iron is hot. I need to know right now. Come on, let’s go.”

Eh!? Why did I have to...!?

“Could you not simply ask somebody else? Why me?”

“You’re the only one I know that’s ever been to one of those places.”

“You must be joking. It is just fast food; you definitely know others who have been. Actually, Takamichi-san certainly qualifies. Why not use this opportunity to have her take you? A little date of sorts. A perfect fit for a normal high schooler.”

“No. I don’t want her to know that I’ve never been before. If I ever go with her, I want to be able to smoothly lead.”

What the heck kind of stupid pride was that?

“Does she really need somebody to lead her in a fast food store?”

“Just trust me. I’ve got to scout the location before a date. Let’s go.”

“I actually have cram school today...”

“Then we just have to hurry before your cram school starts. Hurry up and get ready.”

This guy...

This was the same guy who promised earlier to be more considerate, right?

On the other hand, he didn’t look like he’d be easily convinced to back down.

Were we going to be going in our uniforms like this?

I was worried we’d stand out.

And what if somebody we knew saw us?

“Then we should at least pick somewhere further away where we will not bump into classmates.”

“Why?”

“The rules say that we are only to go to lessons or cram school right after school, you know?”

“...And who exactly would stop us?”

Yeah~ Good point.

I couldn't imagine anybody with the guts to tell off the Emperor of Zui'ran just for stopping by a fast food place after school.

Besides, plenty of other people couldn't be bothered to go home and change before going shopping or eating anyway.

“It would not be good for others to know that the daughter of the Kisshouin family has been to a fast food restaurant! And our uniforms are too eye-catching!”

Did he have any idea how much care I'd taken not to get caught all this time!?

As if I was going to let all my efforts go to nothing thanks to this stupid disciple!

Plus, the biggest problem was that being seen with him would start weird rumours!

“Hmm... Alright.”

“And please avoid telling anybody else about this.”

“Fine.”

He had better mean it.

I wouldn't allow anyone to get in my way.

Still, I supposed I could go with him for today. After all, I was a bit harsh to him that day.

And that was how I ended up getting in his car to head to a far away fast food joint.

\*

\*

We had ourselves dropped off near a train station, and walked into a nearby fast food restaurant.

All over the place were students from other schools.

“Oi, Kisshouin! Teach me how to order!” he whispered to me.

“You simply line up at the counter and tell them what you want when it is your turn.”

“I see.”

Kaburagi complied and lined up in a queue.

He seemed to be standing there rather arrogantly, but a closer inspection revealed that he was actually staring at the menu up top.

Gosh, did this guy stand out.

Everybody was looking at us.

Some of the girls were taken with Kaburagi and began whispering furiously, but the guy himself paid them no heed and kept his gaze nailed to the menu.

It was normal for Kaburagi to ignore the girls around him, but this time it seemed to be out of a genuine focus on the menu.

Eventually it was our turn.

Kaburagi ordered an iced coffee and a hamburger.

“Would you like fries with that? It would upgrade your order to this meal set,” suggested the employee.



Kaburagi's eyes swam about, suddenly overwhelmed.

I tugged on his sleeve to snap him out of it.

"Since we are already here, why not?" I suggested to him.

"Good idea," he immediately agreed.

In the end I got a cheeseburger meal as well.

Trays in hand, the two of us went to find somewhere to sit on the second floor.

"This was cheaper than expected..." Kaburagi muttered to himself in awe.

Well yeah.

But when he took a sip of the iced coffee, he grimaced.

"This is really watered down," he said.

"That is how they are," I replied.

There was no use in expecting anything out of the drinks from these places.

I took a sip myself of my oolong tea and unwrapped my burger.

After watching me, Kaburagi copied my actions before taking a bite.

“I see.”

He seemed to come to some sort of realisation before nodding to himself in admiration.

Kaburagi looked around.

“There are a lot of high schoolers here...” he muttered.

“It is the right price for a small snack after school,” I explained. “It is also another chance to spend more time with your friends.”

“I see...”

“If you feel a little more hungry than that, usually you would head to a family restaurant instead, or if you are a boy, then perhaps a ramen stall.”

“I see...”

Kaburagi went back to his chips.

French fries were good stuff~

I never went to a fast food place without ordering chips, you know?

Naturally there was a Reika’s Chips Ranking as well.

French fries were my favourite.

I took a mouthful of fries as well.

Oops, nearly forgot.

I opened up my tomato sauce.



Tomato sauce was essential to french fries, after all.

Kaburagi's eyes widened.

"Oi! What the heck is that!?" he demanded.

"Tomato sauce," I answered primly.

After dipping a chip in, I carried it into my mouth.

Kaburagi began searching his own tray.

"Why? Why doesn't my tray have done!?"

"If you do not ask while ordering, they will not give you any."

"Why didn't you say it for me!? I didn't hear anything about this!"

"Oh, did you want some?"

Kaburagi glared at me in vexation.

Huhu.

I paid him no mind and continued to eat my sauce-covered french fries.

Yummyy~

Tomato-sauce covered french fries are so good.

“...Let me borrow that.”

“Out of the question.”

If he used some too, there wouldn't be enough for me.

I was one of those types who *had* to have tomato sauce with her chips.

“Then couldn't you go get some for me too?”

“No. Why do you not go yourself?”

Going up and down those stairs was a pain.

“...I still haven't had enough experience with fast food restaurants to go by myself.”

“What in heavens are you talking about?”

“...There are so many people lining up. Should I really join the queue just for tomato sauce?”

“You can simply ask from the side of the counter.”

“But the staff are so busy. It's too hard for me,” he shook his head.

Then just give up.

“Aren't you a bit too cold?”

“A painful mistake is the best lesson. From now on, will you ever forget to order tomato sauce again? This is a learning experience.”

Isn't that great, Kaburagi?

You've learnt something else about fast food chains.

Kaburagi just looked at me bitterly as he chewed on his hamburger.

It occurred to me again that His Imperial Majesty Emperor Kaburagi was sitting next to me, chewing on a cheeseburger from a fast food joint.

This was beyond the wildest dreams of anybody from Zui'ran.

And to think that he'd be so lost in here too.

“Anyway, I think I've mostly grasped how these fast food joints work.”



“How naïve.”

“What?”

I took a sip of my tea before replying.

“Unlike this store where your food is mostly prepared beforehand, there are fast food places where they begin cooking after you order.”

“What did you say!?”

“In those cases, they give you a ticket and you have to wait until the cooking is done.”

“Is such a thing even possible...!?”

“They may all be ‘fast food’ stores, but each one has their own characteristics, and most importantly, their own menus. You would be making a grave mistake if you thought today was all there was to it.”

Kaburagi looked thunderstruck by my revelation.

Fwohfwohfwoh! The commoner’s way of life has profound depths!

After we finished our meals, we stood up from our seats.

Oi, Kaburagi.

This guy was actually just going to up and leave.

Your throw your own rubbish away here, dude.

This isn’t the time to be going “I see...” and nodding to yourself.

You better take notes on everything you remember from today.

Because I’m not going to teach you again, okay!?

“Next is the family restaurant,” he announced.

Go by yourself!

# Chapter 220

*Fujiwara no Narimichi was a **Major Counselor (Dainagon)** during the latter half of the Heian period.*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daij%C5%8D-kan#Council\\_of\\_State](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Daij%C5%8D-kan#Council_of_State)

*Narimichi was famous for his god-like skill of **Kemari (Japanese ancient ball kicking game)**, and a legend states that he made a round trip on the balustrade/railing of the Kiyomizudera stage, all while kicking a ball. As such, he is sometimes known as the **Kemari Dainagon (Kemari Advisor)**.*

---

***Tokugawa Tsunayoshi** was a Tokugawa Shogun.*

*Owing to religious fundamentalism, Tsunayoshi sought protection for living beings in the later parts of his rule. In the 1690s and first decade of the 18th century, Tsunayoshi, who was born in the Year of the Dog, thought he should take several measures concerning dogs.*

*A collection of edicts released daily, known as the Edicts on Compassion for Living Things told the populace, among other things, to protect dogs. An apprentice was even executed because he wounded a dog.*

*Over 50,000 dogs were deported to kennels in the suburbs of the city where they would be housed. They were apparently fed rice and fish which were at the expense of the taxpaying citizens of Edo.*

*Therefore, he earned the pejorative title **Inu-Kubō (The Dog Shogun)**.*

---

The new 1st years were starting to look for a club.

If the Handicrafts Club wanted to thrive, what it needed was to secure new members.

I was going to show off Minami-kun to try and get some male members in.

Plenty of men worked in fashion and clothing so there had to be a few boys in Zui'ran that were interested in handicrafts.

I didn't know where they were hiding, but I was going to snatch them all!

Or so I had thought, but it didn't go as well as I wanted.

Wondering how the other clubs were doing their recruiting, I went over to the Soccer Club.

On the sports field, they were having a competition to see who could juggle the most times, which everyone was having a lot of fun with.

Hmm, so they were going for the thing where you gave newcomers a taste of the club, huh?

The 1st years seemed to be rather enjoying it.

In the end, the person who won the competition was the President of the Soccer Club.

Hmmmm~ So he was actually the most skilled, then.

Even now, the president was effortlessly juggling the soccer ball as the spectators clapped 'go, go, go, go'.

Walking over, I joined in and clapped along too, but the moment our eyes met he tripped over his own feet and dropped the ball.

My, my~

What a shame.

Ah well, you did your best, buddy. Clap clap clap.

No sooner had I started applauding did he entirely ignore the ball in favour of running over to me.

Ah, was he here to thank me for cheering for him?

"Are you here to get dirt on me again...!?"

"Oh my, what a terrible case of persecution complex! All I wanted to do was see how your club was doing, and this is how you treat me..."

So mean~ So cruel~

And from your phrasing, can I take it to mean that there's still some dirt on you to use?

I leant around him to get a good look at his club members.

Oh my. Were those boys from my class that I spied?

So they were in the Soccer Club?

I waved at them.

Ah-, they ran.

Suddenly, the President of the Soccer Club took a step to the side.

In other words, so that he was right in front of me.

By the time I got to have another look, the club members were long gone.

Tsk.

“What my club was doing?”

The President of the Soccer Club was looking at me dubiously.

“Why, yes. I happened to be passing by when I noticed how much energy there was, so I simply wandered over. I must say that you are exceptional at juggling. No wonder the presidency went to you. I was very impressed. Why, it was though I was watching the Kemari Dainagon reborn.”

“Kemari Dainagon...”

Apparently in the Heian era there was a Dainagon who was an expert at kemari, and he juggled a ball as he made a lap of the Kiyomizudera stage guardrail from on top of it.



They even called him the Football Saint for that, but in my opinion being so obsessed about kemari that you'd dare yourself to juggle as you balance on the railings to a 13 metre drop actually makes you a Football Idio-...

Wait, no, no. Being so whole-heartedly dedicated is something to respect. Yeah.

"For your next challenge, I personally recommend that you try walking on the gym room balance beams as you juggle the ball."

Soccer Club President, go forth and become the Kemari Dainagon of the modern age!

Even though I praised him, and even graciously offered some advice, the Kemari Dainagon just tried to shoo me away.

"You're scaring all of my club members. I'm begging you, please go back to your own club. Here, please take this."

In the end he even gave me a sports drink.

Oi, Kemari Dainagon. Don't think you can appease me with just a bit of protection money.

In the end I went to look at how the other clubs were doing.

The majority just did as normal while the new students watched.

The Choir Club invited their guests to sing along, which seemed like a lot of fun.

In the Go and Shogi Club, they played a few rounds together.

Yeah. The places that got the 1st years involved tended to do a lot better.

And since training often brought cheering fangirls, one of the sports clubs was even luring in 1st years with women.

Speaking of which, the Chief of the Casanova Village had once been in this very club...

As I was walking along, I dropped by the Judo Club for a peek, only to find Nonose-san calling out to Iwamuro-kun.

“Takashi-kun, I’ll leave a towel here, okay~?”

Ta ka shi ku n?

Maiden No. 2, don’t you have something to report to your Guru?

Spywork done, I decided it was about time to head back to my own club.

I had just started walking back when I bumped into Birdbrain Katsuragi.

Oh right, this guy was a new student as well.

The moment he realised who I was, his face turned sour.

“I thought I told you to stay away from Enjou-san.”

He was speaking to a third year, and that was the first thing he said, huh?

Since he had no manners, I simply ignored him and moved on.

“Oi!”

“Pardon me. I have no time to spare on birdbrains that cannot even manage a greeting~”

Leaving a parting line, I ohohohoho’d away.

“Enjou-san already has Yuiko-san!”

Stop making a fuss, you noisy thing.

How many times are you going to repeat that the moment you see my face?

“My, what *true* love for your dear Yuiko-san~ How gallant of you~” I mocked.

Birdbrain flushed and was at a loss for words, so I just left him and quickly made my way.

Tsk. Things were going to get annoying with that guy around.

If he had any complaints, he could take them to Enjou.

\*

\*

Our recruitment efforts had previously amounted to explaining our club activities, and showing the 1st years around the club room.

However, after the new information I got from scouting, we were now incorporating activities so the guests would get a taste of what our club was like.

In front of the clubroom we placed a poster that read,

‘Free workshop currently available. Try your hand at handicrafts!’

Since it needed to be something simple, we decided that the course would involved making their own pocket tissue case.



We weren't exactly 100% sure about the pocket tissue case, but at least the program showcased the atmosphere of our club to the visiting 1st years. Plus, it also made it easier for them to ask us questions, and by the time the course was over they were comfortable enough to chat about things besides the club activities too.

"I can't believe we overlooked a trial program. As expected of you, Reika-sama."

"Thanks to you, we've been getting more visitors than last year."

"Even a few boys."

"Should we have a corner for something similar during the School Festival,



Reika-sama?”

Showered in praise from my club members, I smiled happily to myself as I counted the application forms.

Looks like I had Kemari Dainagon to thank.

\*

\*

I decided to grab some more application forms before we ran out, so I found myself heading to the Student Council Room.

Fellow Stalking Horse was inside, working with the other members.

They seemed rather busy, actually.

Wakaba-chan was wearing thimbles and flipping through what seemed to be balance sheets, using her other hand to tap rapidly at a calculator. It was rather incredible to see.

So this was the rumoured calculator technique of Takamichi Wakaba!

“Need something?” Fellow Stalking Horse asked from his seat.

I let him know what I was there for.

“Ah, hang on a moment.”

He got up to grab some for me.

Hmmm~

Why did it feel like a section of the room seemed to be on guard against me?

Did they see this as a trespass because I was with the Pivoine or something?

Fellow Stalking Horse came back with the forms for me.

“Is this enough?”

“Yes, this much is plenty. Thank you.”

On the contrary, it would be great if we could actually get enough recruits for all of these.

“By the way, Kisshouin, there’s something I’d like to show you if you have the

time.”

“What might that be?”

“President!” One of the others jumped out of their seat. “You’re letting *her* know!? Isn’t that as good as showing our hand to the enemy!?”

Eh? What was this?

“Kisshouin is one of their most reasonable members, so it’s fine.”

Having reined in his subordinate, Fellow Stalking Horse held out a piece of paper.

“Here, have a look.”

‘Manual for Dealing with the Pivoine’

“A lot of the new Externals mess up in their interactions with the Pivoine. That’s why we thought a manual would be good.”

“My.”

I didn’t see why they shouldn’t.

Usually it fell to the class representative or an Internal Student to subtly teach the newcomers, but it was hardly comprehensive.

As a result, it wasn’t uncommon to see some External breaking out in a cold sweat after making a mistake.

Even the Internal Students had trouble sometimes deciding how much they could say.

“We’ve had something like this before, but parts of it were vague and unhelpful, so this time we clarified and itemised it all. What do you think?”

“It sounds like a good idea. Will you be providing these to all of the External Students?”

“No, just the class representatives. I don’t think it would be a good idea to hand these out, so they can pass the word on instead.”

“I see.”

The things on that list were unspoken rules rather than official ones, after all,

so it wouldn't do to leave evidence.

Fellow Stalking Horse looked at the manual with an ambivalent smile.

"Personally, I don't know how I feel about the Student Council being the spearhead for a manual that promotes preferential treatment of the Pivoine. Takamichi was the one who argued that without the manual, it would be the Externals getting the short end of the stick."

Wakaba-chan!?

Come to think of it, most of this manual was identical to the letter that I gave Wakaba-chan, the one with the list of things to be careful about.

I looked towards her, still clicking away at her calculator, and hearing her own name she looked up in my direction as well and flashed us a smile.

"In your opinion, is there anything missing, Kisshouin?"

"Let me see... Hmmm... Do not sit in the reserved Pivoine seats. Do not casually abandon decorum with the Pivoine. Give way if you come across them in hallways. Do not step on peony flowers nor handle them roughly while on school grounds..."

"Is she the Dog Shogun or something...?" somebody whispered.

"My, that was a good one!" I smiled affectionately at him like he was a dear friend, but he suddenly looked downwards and fell silent. My~

Since the contents of the manual were basically the same as my own thoughts, there wasn't much to add.

"I think this is fine as it is. Going into too many trivialities would become its own problem, after all," I told Fellow Stalking Horse. "What if instead of leaving it as a manual for dealing with the Pivoine, you incorporate it into a list of customs endemic to Zui'ran as a whole? Things to watch out for that you would not have to in other schools. I think you would get less backlash that way."

"I see. That might be a good idea. As it is now, it's a bit too blunt about the special treatment that the Pivoine get. Still, customs that you'll only find in Zui'ran, huh? Like what?"

"I have one! The ban on gumboots!" Wakaba-chan suddenly offered, shooting

her hand up energetically.

“Is that something you’d really put in the manual...? I don’t think anybody but you would have done that anyway, Takamichi.”

“No way!”

“I’m serious. Come on, you should have noticed it from the fact that there’s no exclusive Zui’ran version of it.”

“Ehhhh. Then how about no running in the hallways, or not taking the stairs two at a time then?”

“Takamichi, there are rules against those in normal schools too.”

“Ehhhh.”

The two of them seemed to be getting along really well.

This...

“Then what *is* one of Zui’ran’s special customs?” asked Wakaba-chan at a loss.

Suddenly all eyes were on me again.

“Let me see... For example, a note that only the girls are to use ‘gokigen’yoh’, perhaps.”

“Ohh~! I see~!” clapped Wakaba-chan.

“As almost everyone here entered Zui’ran during middle school or high school, what if you wrote down a list of what you were taken aback by when you first began?” I suggested.

“I see. Let’s try that. Any ideas, guys?” asked Fellow Stalking Horse.

“Homemade Valentine’s chocolates are frowned upon.”

“Why *is* that?”

“Beats me. I guess to avoid food poisoning?”

“I have one! The ban on using promotional towels with company logos on it!”

“Takamichi-san, the issue there isn’t some custom, but that you have no hope left as a girl.”

“Ehhhh.”

“Still, I can see some of the boys doing that, so maybe we’ll put it in anyways.”

“Bowling in front of the school gates.”

“Isn’t that actually in the school rulebook?”

“The ban on conbini bentou.”

“That’s an important one.”

“It is, isn’t it. I stood out so badly during my first few lunches because of that.”

“I have one! The ban on wearing raincoats!”

“Takamichi, I think that’s just you.”

“Geez, Mizusaki-kun. I’ve never worn one either, okay?”

Good luck, guys~

With my application forms in hand, I left the Student Council Room.

## Chapter 221

The following Monday, no sooner had I reached the entrance to the school building did Kaburagi approach me.

“Don’t forget our promise to meet after school,” he said, sounding a little more excited than usual.

Okay, okay.

Kaburagi had gone on a library date with Wakaba-chan yesterday.

In the evening I received a message from him that read,

‘I went to the library today. I’ll tell you the rest in person, so let’s meet after school in the usual room.’

I suppose it must have gone a lot better than last time.

What an open book...

\*

\*

“You’re late, Kisshouin!”

Incapable of hiding his good cheer, that was the first thing he said to me when I arrived at the conference room.

Knowing him, he wanted to talk about it so badly that he couldn’t help himself.

I was still taking a seat when he began recounting his Sunday with great gusto.

“Learning from my previous mistake, this time I suggested going to a local library. That way we wouldn’t meet Mizusaki by accident.”

“My~”

“So the two of us managed to study together without any interlopers. Unlike the previous library though, this one didn’t have a café, so after a while we ended up going outside for a break.”

“Ohh~”

“The problem was that there weren’t any good cafés outside. What the place *did* have was a fast food chain.”

“My~”

“So that was when I said it: ‘How about here?’ Takamichi was shocked. But as a man who’s already passed the fast food test, I walked in without hesitation.

“Obviously I upgraded my order to a meal. This time I went with a limited time offer.

“Did you know, Kisshouin? Fast food chains do this thing where they bring in special meal sets for a limited time.”

Yes, I do know.

Didn’t we see the ads last time?

“Naturally I asked for tomato sauce. And guess what? Takamichi forgot to ask for tomato sauce with her fries. That was when I suggested that we share mine.”

By now, Kaburagi had become unable to suppress his smile.

“After all, I’m generous, not a hogger like you. Takamichi thanked me and said ‘Since there’s only one, let’s use it carefully.’ Then I said ‘Yeah’ and the two of us ate it little by little...”

Wow, you’re smirking real bad, Kaburagi.

“Since I got the tomato sauce even though you had to ask for it, Takamichi thinks that I’m familiar with fast food. ‘I had no idea people like you came to these places too,’ she said. So I said, ‘Yeah, sometimes.’

“It was actually only my second time though. I have to say I handled myself pretty well. We talked a lot more than usual after that. Since we weren’t allowed to talk much at the library we talked all the more about what questions we found hard, or how we were doing at school. It was great.

“Before I knew it, we’d been in that store for over an hour. When it was time to head back to the library, Takamichi laughed and said ‘We talked too much.’

“Then she gave me a mint. It was so sweet...”

“Ohh~”

I guess it was extra sweet because he got it off the girl he liked.

This kid already had one foot in the world of maidens.

“Oi, Kisshouin! Are you even listening? What’s up with your responses!?”

“I most certainly am.”

You were just talking about how your library date with Wakaba-chan was a huge success, right?

Good for you~

“I think going to that fast food place was the right move. Takamichi laughed a lot too.”

“Perhaps she was more relaxed than usual because it was an environment she was used to. I imagine she also felt closer to you after finding out that you supposedly frequented the place.”

“Yeah, I think so too.” Kaburagi gave a large nod.

“Well what good news that turned out to be for you. Please keep at it. Well then, was that all you needed me for?”

Maybe after showing my face at the Salon for a bit I’d head to the clubroom.

I needed to come up with a plan to mingle with our new members as the club president.

“What are you talking about? I was just about to get into the main agenda.”

“Eh?”

“The reason I closed the distance between us this time was because I matched myself to her lifestyle. That’s why I’m planning on learning more and more about the life of a commoner. Next is the family restaurant.”

Guh. I was getting a bad feeling about this...

Kaburagi shot vigorously out of his chair.

“Let’s go, Kisshouin! To a family restaurant!”



I *knew* it!

\*

\*

I tried in vain to tell him that I had plans, and was dragged away to a faraway family restaurant.

“A family restaurant is the same as a regular restaurant, so you did not have to do this...”

“Come on, don’t be like that. Aren’t you my strategist?”

“I have no recollection of accepting such a shady position...”

Strategist? Are you kidding me?

Our relationship is one of master and disciple, okay!

As you’d expect of him, Kaburagi paid me no heed at all and instead examined the menu with great interest.

Listen to me, already.

I ended up ordering a doria.



Kaburagi asked for the steak meal set. Like a kid who learnt a new word and was bursting for a chance to use it.

There was a moment of shock when he found out that drinks were self-serve at family restaurants, which led to a lot of curiosity about the drinks dispenser.

Wha-, are you a kid or something? You're only meant to take one drink at a time!

There was a short wait when we returned to our table before the food arrived.

Doria was amazing.

You had to eat it little by little if you didn't want to get burnt though.

"...It thought this last time too, with the hamburger, but this meat is different from what I'm familiar with," Kaburagi muttered after a bite of his steak.

No kidding.

The meat you're familiar with probably comes from the winning cow at an

agricultural fair, with a pedigree that goes back a hundred generations or something.

“There are all sorts of meat in this world.”

“I see...”

That was all he had to say, and he continued his meal in silence.

“By the way, apparently Takamichi studies every day on the train. Aren’t trains packed, though? So instead of trying to study in that cramped environment, I’m thinking about suggesting to her that I start driving her between home and school from now on.”

“That is an absolutely horrible idea.”

Not another one of his stupid suggestions...

“Why? This is for her sake.”

What do you mean ‘her sake’?

It’s obviously that you just want to spend more time with her outside of school.

“Takamichi-san has her own routine and her own way of living. It may be that she even studies better on the train. There are many people in this world who study better during transit. Your suggestion might actually bother her.”

“...Can’t you be in transit in a car instead?”

“So even though you go out of your way to pick her up from her house and ”  
“Can you really see her happily studying without a care as you sit in silence right next to her, after having gone out of your way to pick her up right from her home? I know you have driven her to school a few times. Do you ever recall her pulling out a textbook and start reading?”

“No...”

“You see? Most people would be unable to. If Takamichi-san herself said that she was struggling it would be one thing, but if not then stop meddling with her life. You understand?”

“Alright...”

He gave a reluctant nod.

Was there any need to look so depressed...?

This guy never came up with anything good, did he.

“Well, onto the next topic then. I wanna go with her to somewhere besides a library. Where’s a good place?”

“Hmmm, well it certainly depends on the preferences of the girl in question. Being brought to somewhere you have no interest in would simply be a study in boredom, after all.”

“That makes sense.”

“What if you brought up our class trips, subtly probe her interests, and begin looking for places based on that? It would also make for a conversation that is not about studying.”

“That’s a *great* idea! I’ll try it right away!”

“Whether you are messaging them, or giving them a call, please take a moment first to consider other party’s circumstances first.”

“That’s all you ever say. I told you already, I’ve got it.”

If you got it then who was it that dragged me to a family restaurant just now!?

Anyway, since the Emperor had successfully cleared the Family Restaurant dungeon, it was now time for us to leave.

“Besides being made for commoners, these family restaurants aren’t all that different from regular restaurants.”

I told you that at the start!

But well, since we were already here, I took the opportunity to show off a technique that Kaburagi had definitely never seen before.

We brought our receipts to the register.

“I would like to pay separately.”

Splitting the cost is a thing that people do, okay? Don’t forget it.

\*

\*

The 23rd of April was the La Diada de Sant Jordi.

Men gave women roses, and women gave men a book.

Truly a holiday that smelt of a secret cabal of bookstores and florists.

Naturally, I wouldn't let this chance escape me.

"Kaburagi-sama, please take this."

"What's going on?"

"Today is the La Diada de Sant Jordi. It is customary to give books to your friends, family, lovers, or benefactors."

Along with some book that I picked out at random, I returned the unlucky poem anthology that had been sealed in my storehouse.

I did it!

"What the hell!? If you knew about it then why didn't you tell me earlier!?  
Aaah! I completely forgot! I missed such a good chance!"

Dashing out of the salon, Kaburagi sprinted off to a florist.

Don't forget to think about the *number* of flowers~

## Chapter 222

<https://www.japanvisitor.com/kyoto/bloody-ceilings>

^ short but interesting read

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne\\_Boleyn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anne_Boleyn)

^ longer but even more interesting read

---

A rumour had formed around the fact that I was seen constantly getting into Kaburagi's car.

'Kaburagi-sama and Reika-sama went home together today.'

'This morning, Kaburagi-sama told Reika-sama not to forget about their promise after school.'

This was horrible.

Since this was all Kaburagi's fault, even if by some chance he came to blame me for it this time I was going to bite him back.

Seriously though, it was actually so depressing having these unfounded love stories being told about yourself.

"Gosh, Reika-sama. When did *this* happen?"

"I've always thought that you'd be a great match for Kaburagi-sama."

"Say, Reika-sama, won't you tell us what kind of chats you've been having with him?"

"Waah! Me too, me too!"

At lunch, the girls pestered me for love stories with stars in their eyes.

What kind of chats, you ask? Mostly about Kaburagi's ridiculous romance, and lectures on how commoners live.

Did you know, girls~? Kaburagi wanted to light up fireworks for his confession, and he gave a girl he wasn't even dating yet a handmade ring with their initials carved into it~

“We shared a car because I had some business with him, but nothing like what you girls are imagining, all right?”

“Ehh? But people saw him take your hand too.”

Probably that time I really didn't want to go, he got tired of my trudging, and then dragged me away by the arm.

“Perhaps it was the time he pulled me forward because I was walking too slowly. I doubt it was more than that.”

“I heard that the two of you seemed to be talking quite cordially with each other.”

“About studies, I suspect.”

Like that time I suggested textbooks and workbooks as a present, or the time Kaburagi told me about his library date.

The girls seemed put out by my boring explanations, but who was going to take responsibility if these baseless rumours drove the boys even further away from me?

Right now I still had the faint hope that somewhere in this school at least one boy secretly had a crush on me.

Since I recently rid myself of that unlucky poem anthology my love life was definitely going to get better from here.

“Kisshouin-san, I've gathered the free time plans from the boys.”

Satomi-kun came my way with the papers for the class trip. I had already collected the same forms from the girls.

“Shall we hand them in then?”

“I can go by myself, you know?” he suggested, being considerate of the fact that I was chatting with my group.

“No, that is fine. Let us go together.”

And so we left for the Student Council in order to hand in the plans that everyone had for their free day.

Most people were going to the same places anyway, though.

Serika-chan and the others waved us goodbye.

“Where are you girls going on your free day?” Satomi-kun asked me.

“We plan on seeing a musical.”

“Oh? Quite a few people are doing that. Which one you watching?”

“The Phantom of the Opera,” I replied.

“The one with the falling chandelier?”

“Yes. And where might you going?”

“We’re gunna watch a soccer match.”

I see. So that was what the boys were interested in.

We were going to Europe after all.

Where else would the Kemari Dainagon and his friends go?

“My mum wants me to buy some stuff for her though. It’s pretty bad.”

“My.”

“I mean I looked at the shopping list but didn’t really get it, so some girls agreed to let me tag along when they’re going to each brand’s shops.”

Oh my god, this guy already had a plan to spend time with girls on his free day...!

Damned Satomi, I’m so envious.

This was an overseas class trip, okay?

Moriyama-san said there was this boy in her own class trip, and after visiting temples and shrines, and eating dango and just hanging out together they ended up dating.

As for me, far from having a boy in my own group, none of them would even talk to me.

So lonely.

I was supposed to be in a co-ed school, so how come I had been surrounded by girls since primary school?



It's not like I was wearing a t-shirt telling the boys to keep a polite distance or anything.

"By the way, Kisshouin-san, have you heard of the ghost of the London Tower?"

"That sounds scary, so please stop talking."

Talking about ghosts was liable to attract them, you know.

"Ehhh~ Doesn't it get you excited though? Apparently Anne Boleyn appears with both her head and without it."

"It does not. Let us change the subject. How many coins are you planning to toss into the Trevi Fountain?"

Satomi-kun was definitely the sort to go look at the blood ceilings of Kyoto, wasn't he?

Hiiee~ Scaryy.

As we made our way to the Student Council room, the two of us continued chatting about what sights we wanted to see or what foods we wanted to try.

"Excuse me, we are here to submit the plans for the free day."

"Thanks for your work."

Besides Fellow Stalking Horse, today there were also two other boys and Wakaba-chan present.

It must have been rough having to come here even during their lunch breaks.

"You working hard, Mizusaki?"

"So-so. You doing your job as class rep properly?"

"Obviously, bro. Look, I'm even running errands at lunch time, right in front of your eyes. Show a bit more appreciation why dontcha."

"As if."

The two of them seemed to be good friends from the way they bantered.

"Oh? What are those cookies?" Satomi-kun gestured towards a clear bag filled with cookies atop the President's desk.

“Takamichi brought them in.”

“Takamichi-san did?”

Wakaba-chan’s handmade cookies!?

“I baked some cookies yesterday, so I thought I’d bring them in for everyone~” Wakaba-chan explained with a cheery smile.

“Ah, so that’s how it is. Can I have one too? I’ll keep quiet about you guys snacking in the Student Council Room.”

“Ahaha, help yourself~”

He picked one up and took a bite.

“It’s great. You’re really good at this, Takamichi-san.”

That was the daughter of a cake shop for you.

“Would you like one too, Kisshouin-san?” she offered without worry, so I accepted without hesitating.

“Thank you. I think I would.”



They were chocolate cookies, delicious and sweet with just a hint of bitterness.

Maybe I could learn to bake cookies next.

Putting that aside though, the people in the room seemed a bit taken aback by my casual show of eating one.

Oh, so that's what it was.

Nobody else here was aware that Wabaka-chan had already won over my stomach.

"That was delicious. Thank you."

I wanted another one but I thought better of it.

Afterwards we were given some things to look out for during the free day and then we left the room.

Hmmm~

Judging by what I'd seen, it didn't seem like her first time bringing her

homemade food to the Student Council.

If Kaburagi knew, he'd definitely be jealous~

In terms of time spent with her, Fellow Stalking Horse was overwhelmingly in the lead.

Can you turn this around, Kaburagi!?

\*

\*

That night I called Wakaba-chan, which made for a good chance to thank her for the cookie too.

"It was crunchy and amazing. Would it be all right if I came over again to learn how to make them?"

"Of course. You're welcome any time. The other day with the teppanyaki was fun, wasn't it? The meat you brought over was delicious!"

"Huhu, it was."

That was a fun day~

I even got so relaxed that I called her Wakaba-chan a few times.

"Do you often bring snacks to the Student Council Room?"

"Sometimes. Everyone's so busy after school that we often run late enough to get peckish."

Tomoe-senpai used to eat quite a few snacks too.

How nostalgic. Back then he was still growing after all.

"A special privilege of the Student Council, I see."

"Ahaha. Oh, that reminds me. The manual from the other day is finished now."

"Oh! How was it?"

"Apparently it's been quite useful to new students. We guessed right about there being a lot they didn't know."

“I see. That is good news then.”

“A few of them had already brought convenience store lunches to school though. After all, it’s normal in other schools.”

“Quite.”

Everyone did it in my old life.

“I’ve been wondering if the students at Zui’ran have even ever tried a convenience store bentou before.”

“Hmmm~ I wonder.”

At the very least I don’t think the Internals had.

I often bought onigiri though. There were lots of types, but in the end I’d just choose salmon~

“Ah, but the other day I went to a fast food joint with Kaburagi-kun!”

Oh!? We were talking about *this* now!?

“My, with Kaburagi-sama?”

“Yeah. We were studying at a library, right? And then we went out for a little break but there weren’t any restaurants that suited Kaburagi-kun.

“I was wondering what to do when suddenly he asked me, ‘Is this place fine?’ and suddenly walked right into a fast food shop. I was *sooo* shocked. I was sure that people from the Pivoine had never even step foot in one before!”

Mn, you’d be right.

Kaburagi had only had his first time a little while ago.

“It seems like he goes there quite often. Apparently he normally orders the burgers, but goes for seasonal items when they appear.”

“Ohh~?”

“I thought Kaburagi-kun only ate at like 3-star restaurants. Who would’ve thought he ate fast food. I was really surprised. Apparently he started because he wanted to see what the rest of society was like.”

Ah, he stole my line about “life experiences” didn’t he. Damned Kaburagi.

“I mean I know we’ve been going to the same school, but I always thought of him as living in another world. I didn’t think he was so normal. I feel a little closer to him now.”

“I see.”

Oohh, so the plan to raise her familiarity worked then. Go me. Good advice, me!

“Anyway, Kaburagi-kun called me a little while ago to talk about the class trip. I mentioned that I wanted to go to some famous sweets stores, and he offered to take me. We ended up planning to go together. What do you think, Kisshouin-san...?”

“Haah!?”

Kaburag! What the heck was he doing *this* time!?

I know I told him to research her likes but I never told him to force his way into her free day!

“I... You must have your own plans as well. If he is bothering you, then I think you should turn him down clearly.”

Ahh, that idiot, that idiot...

If he got himself hated it was nothing to do with me.

“Mmmm, he’s not botheirng me at all. I’m actually glad that he offered.”

“Eh!?”

Now *that* was a surprise!

I mean, Wabaka-chan had to have had her own plans with her friends, right?

“What about your friends, Takamichi-san?”

“Ah, well you see, my other friends are all going to go shopping. I’m not really that interested in brand clothing, so I was planning on going to the famous confectioners and cake shops instead.

“I had actually planned to go on my own, but since it’s going to be my first time overseas, walking on my own is going to be a bit scary, right? I mean I don’t really understand the tip system, and...”

“I see.”

“I told Kaburagi-kun, so he suggested that he come along. I know he offered, but I’d feel bad about making him spend his free day accompanying me. He has to have places he wants to visit too, after all...”

Places that Kaburagi wants to visit?

As if that stupid disciple of mine had anywhere he’d want to see more than spending his free day with Wakaba-chan.

“...I truly wonder about that. Kaburagi-sama has been to Europe countless times before, so I doubt he has anywhere left he really wants to go.”

“You think so?”

“Quite. Besides, Kaburagi-sama has quite a sweet tooth, so perhaps he wanted to go as well.”

“I see. Then do you think it’d be okay to accept...? You know, Kaburagi-kun said that there was a dolce shop in Rome that he recommended. When I heard him say that I honestly really wanted to go!”

“Eh-, dolce...!?”

My heart skipped a beat.

The protagonist of ‘You Are My Dolce’ suddenly using that word?

I almost dropped my phone.

Being a sweet-tooth, in the manga the Emperor had compared his love to sweets(dolce).

And now the real-life Emperor was inviting Wakaba-chan to go try some together.

Was this a sign that things between these two were about to pick up their pace!?

Uhyohh!

I didn’t really understand why, but I was just so excited right now!

“If you want to go, then by all means go! Dolce! What a great idea! *Dolce!*”

“Y-Yeah, thank you...”

I was still in high spirits after we hung up, when a message from Kaburagi arrived.

‘We’re going to be spending our free time in Paris and Rome together!’

‘I wish you luck!’ I replied.

Are you going to say ‘You are my dolce’ to her one day!?

Are you!?

Kaburagi!

\*

\*

After sleeping on it and coming back to my senses, I sent him some advice.

‘Do not do anything too ostentatious. Do not draw attention from other Zui’ran students. Do not try to keep her with you longer than she wants to stay.’

I hoped this trip went well.

---

Some fan art just because.





By [Firi](#) the translator.



By Elly on discord.

## Chapter 223

There is a Japanese superstition of hiding your thumbs when seeing a hearse, especially amongst children, supposedly to protect your parents from an early grave. The reason is because the thumb in Japanese is literally called 'parent finger'.

The Phantom of the Opera is a novel about a deformed builder guy, who is really good at singing. He tutors a Swedish songstress named Christine, who he goes crazy over, and whose childhood friend and love interest is a handsome vicomte named Raoul. Stuff happens, love triangle.

---

Our first destination was London.

At first we all went to the usual sightseeing locations together. The Big Ben,



the Tower of London,



Trafalgar Square,



Buckingham Palace,



Westminster Abbey, among other places.



For most of us they were all places we'd visited countless times in the past but it was a different experience when you were here with all o f your friends.

At the Buckingham Palace, my group and I had quite a bit of fun taking photos of the Changing of the Guard.

Mister horse, you ran past too quickly~!

They looked just like those toys soldiers. As I faintly wondered just how capable they actually were, I smiled to myself about just how foreign this place felt!

London Tower was scary and I ended up hiding my thumbs without thinking. It was Satomi-kun's fault for telling me those stories when I was in Japan...

Eh!? They were taking photos here!?

Was I going to be okay...?

I couldn't hide my thumbs if I was making a peace sign...

"Next up, you'll be able to see the London Bridge and the Tower Bridge from your window," said the tour guide as we rode the bus.



The London Bridge... Somehow just hearing that name was enough to play the nursery rhyme in my head.

"Kisshouin-san, are you feeling okay?," Satomi-kun asked in concern. "You're swaying."

Oh gosh. Apparently I was rocking back and forth to the song in my head.

“Say, Satomi-kun? When you hear the words ‘London Bridge’ does it not bring that Mother Goose song to mind? You know the one, London Bridge is falling d—”

“Ah, the one about child sacrifices?”

Child sacrifices—

...SAAAATOOOOMIIIII!

Why would you bring up something so scary just as we’re crossing it!?

I’m a coward, okay!? Stop it already!

Look! I’m hiding my thumbs again thanks to you!

Before this I had been thinking of buying a copy of Old Mother Goose’s Rhymes as a souvenir. I didn’t think I would now...

These were supposed to be nursery rhymes for children so why were the contents so brutal?

Taking an axe and giving her mother and father forty and forty-one whacks...

How on earth did the children of Great Britain fall asleep to these?

Thanks to Satomi-kun scaring the crap out of me, while my roommate Kikuno-chan was in the bath I took the chance to purify the room with salt.

Sorry about the floor, Kikuno-chan.

\*

\*

The main event for my group during our free day was going to be a musical.

Since that was happenig at night though, before that we were going to do a little shopping and then have some afternoon tea.

We weren’t lacking in things to buy.

Maybe I’d get those rocking horse ballerinas this time around.



Not that I was going to wear them outside, if I did buy them. Walking around in heels like that was too scary for me, so I'd just try them on at home.

Hmm, to buy or not to buy...

Aaah, but more importantly I wanted aromatic candles and essential oils too!

And of course some English tea for a souvenir.

Some pretty books in English too.

I could get Alice in Wonderland and Through the Looking Glass for Mao-chan.

Maybe Peter Pan for Yuuri-kun.

Yukino-kun had wanted Old Mother Goose's Rhymes as well, but was it really okay to get him a book filled with songs about murderers and psychopaths...?

Oniisama liked English brands, so I wanted to find him something too.

Oh, cute cufflinks locked-on!

Maybe I'd buy some ties too!

Haah, shopping is bliss.



When there were too many bags to carry we popped down to the hotel before heading out for more shopping.

After that was what everyone had to try while visiting Britain: afternoon tea.

We passed by a few places that brought out their desserts on plates, but what I really wanted to try was eating from one of those 3-tiered silver stands!



It was like being a princess! I wasn't going to compromise on those 3-tiered stands!

Appearances were important.

"This scone is quite good."

“It really is. It goes perfectly with the jam and clotted cream.”

“Truly.”



Great Britain had a reputation for disgusting cuisine, but the food we had seemed crazy good. Maybe it was the atmosphere.

Atmosphere was really, really important, after all.

Scones weren't exactly a big thing in Japan, but I think after today they'd be a big thing with Reika.

Maybe I could look for a place that did nice scones once I got back home.

Nobody had to know that I actually preferred the biscuits (scones) from a certain American chicken fast food restaurant.



They never gave enough maple syrup though.

...But wow was this jam and cream combination proving itself a formidable adversary to a maiden's stomach.

I wasn't the sort to run and hide from an enemy though.

Damned scone, prepare yourself!

"This is so fun~" sighed Ru'ne-chan. "NY and LA are nice too, but Europe is just..."

"I *know*, right~?"

"Europe is my favourite as well."

I could understand why they all agreed.

I mean, Europe had castles and ancient cityscapes, fantasy and cute cakes, wasn't it just a girl's dream come true?

Serika-chan suddenly sighed.

"But it would be even better if Kaburagi-sama or Enjou-sama were here..."

Right. What was missing from this fairytale atmosphere was a Prince Charming.

Apparently those two fit the bill for her.

Their looks were the only thing going for them, so I supposed they qualified in that department at least.

"Afternoon tea with Kaburagi-sama and Enjou-sama...!"

"Goodness, if it were me I'd be too nervous to eat!"

"Me too! I wouldn't have eaten more than a bite of the sandwiches from before."

"Right? Don't you think so too, Reika-sama?" one of the girls asked me as I was busy duking it out with the scones.

"Eh? Ah, well, I suppose?" I offered.

I suppose if there was a boy I liked nearby, I wouldn't want to look like a glutton either.

"But you must spend time with them all the time in the salon, don't you?" Kikuno-chan asked.

"That's true. Having tea with them must be everyday for Reika-sama. I'm so

envious. What are they like in the salon?”

“Tell us, Reika-sama~!”

Hmmmmmm. I mean, they just drank tea and ate food like normal people, I guess.

Not that I could say that without disappointing the girls.

Being the considerate friend that I was, I decided to help out with their fantasies a little.

“They do not do anything special,” I began. “I suppose they just spend time together like we are now. Kaburagi-sama sometimes plays the piano if he feels like it, so we occasionally have the privilege of enjoying that with our tea.”

“Myy!”

Their dreaminess meters filled up at once.

“What about Enjou-sama?”

“Hmm. He often smiles as he quietly drinks his tea. Most of the time he spends his time chatting with Kaburagi-sama. As you all know, the two of them are *very* close. When Kaburagi-sama plays the piano, Enjou-sama stands by him to enjoy the music. I have even seen them leaning against each other’s backs while reading.”

“How wonderful...!”

“A world with only the two of them...”

“It’s beautiful...”

Well, that last bit actually happened during primary school, but it’s not a lie since I never specified when.

My group stared into space together, no doubt daydreaming about it.

While they were distracted, I got back to my scones.

Don’t rush, Reika.

There’s still the cake monster waiting for you at the top of the tower.

“I wonder what the two of them are doing now...”

“I heard that they were going to watch a soccer game...”

Oh? So that’s what they were doing.

“We can relax then, since it’s just boys that went to that.”

“Yeah. There are lots of girls who are planning to worm up to them during the trip after all.”

“So shameless!”

“It’s especially bad when one of the outsiders try it!”

“I know.”

“I wonder where they’re going when we get to Paris. Touring Paris with them would be like a dream come true.”

“It would, wouldn’t it?”

...In Paris and Rome, Kaburagi was planning on touring dessert stores with Wakaba-chan though~

You better keep the tag-alongs away, Kaburagi!

After we finished up the cake at the top-tier of the platter, we began talking about where to go next.

“We’ve already done our shopping, so what should we do now? We could just rest here.”

“Hmmm.”

Everyone was a bit tired from our earlier shopping but since we were already here I wanted to have some fun.

“Say, since we still have time until the musical, what if we went to the British Museum?”

It was Ayame-chan that suggested this.

The British Museum?

Come to think of it, it was what she was looking forward to the most the whole trip.

I wonder if we’d get to see a cat mummy.

“Good idea. Shall we go?” I asked.

It was a shame to be parting with something as dreamy as afternoon tea, but we had to get going now.

When we got off the taxi we had called, I saw some other Zui’ran students here and there.

Since we didn’t have anything we wanted to see in particular, we all sort of just walked about as we chatted.

“Hmm? Hey, isn’t that...?”

I looked in the direction that Kikuno-chan pointed, only to find Wakaba-chan, Fellow Stalking Horse, and a number of other boys and girls.

So they were here too.

Her bag was strapped to her chest so there was nothing to stop Wakaba-chan from excitedly taking photographs or taking notes.

Sometimes Fellow Stalking Horse would point at an exhibit and say something to Wakaba-chan, which she nodded at in return.

They seemed to really get along.

“Takamichi-san seems awfully friendly with Mizusaki-kun, doesn’t she...”  
Serika-chan commented.

“They *are* in the Student Council together, after all...”

The girls were just staring now.

Oi, stop that, guys!

I hurriedly moved them along before Wakaba-chan noticed.

“Ah, Kisshouin-san,” said a surprised voice.

I turned to find Class Rep, Iwamuro-kun, Miharu-chan and Nonose-san in front of the Rosetta Stone.

“My! You all came here as well?” I asked.

So these four were spending their free day together, huh?

Kuh-! So envious...!

“Mhm. The British Museum never gets old.”

The four of them nodded together.

Wow, they really got along.

Mn, the happiness of a disciple was the happiness of their master.

And I *was* happy but... it was a little vexing.

Wakaba-chan was with a mixed-sex group as well.

Now that I was looking, I could spot other mixed-sex groups from Zui’ran here and there.

It was nothing surprising. We were a co-ed school after all.

So why was it just me that was in a girls’ school!?

After talking to them I found out that the quartet were going to watch the Phantom of the Opera as well.

Ohh~?

Not a surprising choice for a blushing maiden like Class Rep.

“Also, the four of us were thinking about going on a boat tour of the Seine once we get to Paris. Right, guys?”

“Mhm.”

“Yes.”

“Oh...?”

Two couples going on a boat tour down the Seine... Well wasn’t that just romantic.

I was so damned jealous.

...Fine then. Whatever.

I’d already been on one with Oniisama, so there!

And one day I’d definitely find a boyfriend and do the same!

After some parting greetings I watched the four of them leave.

“The Seine. How nice...”



The girls happened to overhear me and thought I was interested in the river itself.

“In that case let’s go on a boat tour too!” they suggested.

Mm. Thanks, girls...

\*

\*

\*

There was still some time until the musical began so we decided to eat dinner first.

But we had eaten quite a bit during afternoon tea, so we weren’t exactly starving either.

Oh, I know!

“Say, how would you all feel about trying fish and chips?”



Fish and chips were like the national fast food here in Britain.

I knew of it, but I hadn’t had the chance to try it before. After all, every time I’d been here I was with family, so eating something so plebeian was out of the question.

It was something I'd wanted to try for the longest time~

Would the girls go for it?

"Fish and chips...?" came the bewildered response.

"Yes. I have seen it mentioned in quite a few books, so I have always wanted to try it," came my excuse.

"Ah, so that's why. I've seen it mentioned too, but I've never tried it before."

"Me neither."

"I might be a little curious..."

"Since we *are* in the right country for it," I said, "why not try some?"

"Okay!"

"Agreed!"

Yay! Fast food in London!

Since we obviously had no experience, none of us were sure where to find some, which was why we decided to try looking it up.

In the books I'd read, fish and chips were something that came wrapped in newspaper that you could eat in a park and such.

In the place that we chose, though, apparently it would come to us on a plate.

Fish and potato chips were big favourites of mine, so I was curiously looking forward to it.

But when the food came...

Fish!

Chips!

It was literally just some fish, and some chips.

"..."

...It kind of made me wonder if they couldn't have prettied this up a bit, or at least made them bite-sized perhaps. It looked a bit low effort. Also there was a lot of it...

B-But perhaps it would taste good! It was so famous after all!

I took a bite.

...It tasted as average as it looked.

Considering that this was their national food I guess the rumours about British food were spot-on...

Long live Japanese commoner food.

Um, sorry, girls.

Bellies filled with grease, we returned to our hotels to change.

Geh, my stomach was bulging a little because of the food...

I reminded myself to stretch before going to bed tonight.

\*

\*

\*

We arrived to a crowd of Zui'ran students.

It was a popular story after all.

Plus, tomorrow we'd be going to Paris where the real Palais Garnier would be. It was a must-see then!

It wasn't long before the musical began, and it was wonderful.

The venue wasn't that big, but the stage was close so it was crazy immersive.

I was completely enraptured.

And when the falling chandelier scene happened I couldn't help but scream, even though I knew it was coming.

Eh? No! Christine!

Don't cry, Phantom!

Phantom, you're the Chief of Paris' Forever Alone Village, aren't you!

Since you're a fellow village chief, let me give you a hearty round of applause.

When the musical finished, even when we left the venue I still felt like I was in a dream.

Everybody else seemed to be under the same effect.

Going to a performance was the right choice! Aah, I felt like breaking into song now!

On the way back to the hotel I spotted Class Rep in tears about it, and Miharu-chan stroking his back.

\*

\*

\*

I spent the whole day moving around, so I was beat~

The moment we got back to the hotel I stepped on the golf ball I brought for rolling over my acupoints.

Haah! So good!

At this point I'd probably be comfortable walking around with it strapped to my foot. Slowly though.

Roll roll roll~

Haah~ The Phantom of the Opera was great. Sad ending, though.

Today I was sharing a room with Serika-chan.

While she was in the bath I channeled Christine and sang quietly.

At some point I started getting into it and began dancing randomly as well.

I sang a little louder.

While I was happily singing and posing at some point my eyes made contact with Serika-chan's, who had at some point come out of the bathroom.

We froze.

—She saw meeeeeee!

But then Serika-chan silently closed her eyes before suddenly walking towards

me and gently taking my hand.

“Christine!”

Phantom!

Clad in her bathtowel cloak, Phantom Serika beckoned songstress Reika into the darkness.

Let us dance! Laaa laaa~ Lalalalala~!

And that was how the two of us, hand in hand, sang together as we made our way into the bowels of the Palais Garnier.

## Chapter 224

Our second destination was Paris, France.

Goodbye, London! I'll come again!

And bonjour, Paris! *Paris!*

Paris was the Rococo Queen's second home. Wah, it was stylish everywhere I looked!

Even though the people walking on the street wore normal clothes, somehow they looked stylish too.

This was some French magic at work.

But even though Paris was supposed to be my second home, for some reason I felt a little out of place each time I came here.

London was populated and tight, and its pace of life somehow reminded me of Tokyo. When I was in London I felt comfortable.

In Paris though, how could I put this... The way the Parisians, or perhaps the French, seemed to think that their fashion, food, and arts were the best in the world rather reminded me of Kyoto.

Ah, naturally I loved Kyoto as well, though.

Anyhow, just like our day in London, Paris began with a structured tour.

Amongst the places we visited were the Eiffel Tower,



the Arc de Triomphe,



the Notre-Dame,



the Sacré-Cœur Basilica.



Just a photo of the Eiffel Tower was a bit like saying “I was in Paris!” wasn’t it?



That was France's fame for you.

Tokyo Tower couldn't even compare in stylishness.

Oh, and there was the Palais Garnier opera house!



Phantom, this is where you are!

Lahlalah~

Everybody who'd seen the Phantom of the Opera in London were as excited as I was.

And little wonder~

The setting of the musical we'd seen only a little while ago was right in front of our eyes.

It was like the excitement from watching the production was coming back to us.

The inside of the building was so gorgeous that I was enchanted.

Ah, so this chandelier would fall then~

The whole place was just so resplendent that I think it would have been worth visiting even without the musical. But after the musical, the place just had so much more appeal.

Since we'd seen a musical in London, it would have been great to see some theatre in Paris. It was just a shame that I couldn't fit it into our schedule.

The Place de la Concorde was where the Rococo Queen had been beheaded.



Eek~

I unconsciously placed my hands around my neck. Guillotines were scaryyy. It must have been pretty crazy seeing people beheaded in public...

A person's head flying off became some kind of sideshow.

What a fearsome people these French were.

I definitely wouldn't be able to watch something like that.

Uoohh~ Just thinking about it was making me shiver.

Ah-, Satomi-kun was coming my way. You're here to say something scary again, aren't you!

"Did you know, Kisshouin-san? Apparently the guillotine was still used for executions until very recently~"

Saaaatooooomiiiiii!

What was I going to do?

What if some headless person visited me at night!?

Thanks to Satomi-kun I was going to have to salt this hotel room too!

The Pont des Arts bridge that ran across the Seine was also known as the Lovers' Bridge.



Couples would write their names on padlocks and attach them to the fence as a vow of love. In other words, this bridge was straight-up picking a fight with me.

Keh! Why were we even here?

Let's just walk faster and head to the Louvre already!

Eh? There were people just standing still!

Don't tell me every one of them was a member of the Fulfilling Romance Village!?

Hey! Are you seriously running off to buy a padlock!?

You're not supposed to walk off during the first day, damnit!

“Kaburagi-sama seems to be in a good mood.”

Apparently people were talking about it.

“Do you think he did something fun?”

“He went to see a soccer match in London, so perhaps his team won?”

“Ah, that might be it. Kaburagi-sama loves his sports.”

The reason Kaburagi was in a good mood was probably, no, *definitely*, thanks to his plans to tour Paris with Wakaba-chan tomorrow.

He was probably completely giddy about it.

The damned idiot was like an open book.

Kaburagi, you’d better not have bought a padlock for this.

On the other hand, I noticed that my maiden friend Class Rep had bought one but couldn’t work up the courage to mention it.

\*

\*

\*

The focus of my free day in Paris was shopping.

A lot of things weren’t being sold in Japan yet, so we got up nice and early to start.

Bags, shoes, accessories, trinkets, sweets... Les Champs-Élysées was a battlefield...!



Ah!

Thanks to Satomi-kun, his group was going shopping with some girls! Thanks to that same guy, I spent last night trembling in fear!

And yet there he was, happily walking down the street surrounded by women!

Unforgivable.

Deadly Sin “Envy”, activate.

Just see how I put a curse on your love-life as you walk away from me, Satomi-kun.

Hmmmm, a lot of these cosmetics were sold for a lot more in Japan. Like this hand cream that I really liked.

I decided to get some for Sakura-chan, Aoi-chan, and the girls at cram school.

But then what about the boys that I knew from there?

I was easy to get presents for girls, but the boys had me stumped.

I mean, there was a reason I was the village chief.

And speaking of boys, Imari-sama was always bringing me souvenirs. I definitely had to get something back.

As the Chief of the Casanova Village, Imari-sama's demeanour might resemble an Italian, but his taste in clothing leaned towards the elegant fashion houses of France.

Which is why while it would be easy to decide to get him something from Paris, picking something that met his fashionable tastes was a bit too high of a hurdle~

Thanks to our many years together I had a pretty good idea of Oniisama's taste, but I was at a loss when it came to anybody else.

Again, there was a reason I was the village chief.

Before I left Japan I had asked Oniisama what he thought a good gift for Imari-sama would be, but all he said was, "Consumables."

So curt!

Oniisama, can't you put a little more thought into it?

Do you want your best friend to think of your little sister as unfashionable!?

I thought about it though... It wouldn't do to give Imari-sama sweets, but what about wine?

But I didn't know his palate, and it probably wasn't as easy as just buying an expensive one.

I was collecting wine labels for when I was old enough to drink, but honestly I had no idea what was good.

And apparently the famous brands had good years and bad years too.

Plus, a lot of this was coming from my idea that Wine = France, but Oniisama drank California wines quite often.

Actually the first time I saw him drinking some I was shocked, but it turns out that recently California wines tasted better than French wines. Oniisama told me this story about how during a taste test in Paris French wines lost to California wines, and now they called it the Judgement of Paris.

Since it was too profound for me, I was getting more and more reluctant to go with the wine~

Mmn, I think I would just stay away from Wine-sama for now.

After a good bit of shopping, we decided to enter a café for some lunch before we continued.

Since we were taking a break, I decided to ask my group what they thought.

“Presents for a boy, is it~?”

“Yes. I find myself unsure.”

Mmmmm! The French bread was yummy! As expected of its country of origin!

Unlike London, the food was great everywhere we went here.

It was so nice to be in a country with good food~

Naturally I ordered the crème brûlée which featured in Amélie.



I was in a different café to the one in the film though.

I felt a bit like Amélie as I cracked the caramel. Ehehe.

“I think neckties may be the right idea.”

“I’ve bought neckties for my family too.”

“Neckties, hmm?” I hummed.

I had considered those as well. That was why I had chosen Paris to get the

souvenirs.

“Well then, after we finish eating how about visit some mens’ stores so that Reika-sama can find a souvenir?” Ru’ne-chan suggested.

Waah! Thank you!

\*

\*

\*

Hmmm. Here I was in a men’s clothing store, and yet I was nowhere closer to a decision.

I had this feeling that neckties were something men cared about. It wouldn’t be nice if he was given a tie he didn’t really want to use...

Lapel pins weren’t much easier to choose.

But cufflinks could just be hidden by your suit jacket, so maybe those would be fine.

Still... Maybe clothing was a bad idea.

Hmmmm...

“I think it may take me some time to decide, so could we meet up afterwards?” I suggested to the girls that came with me.

I’d feel bad if their shopping time was taken up by my indecision in picking souvenirs. I didn’t think I’d be picking something anytime soon.

“But then you would be on your own, Reika-sama.”

“Isn’t shopping on your own just tragic?”

It was nice that they were worried for me, but I was sure they still had places they wanted to see, and they had to be getting bored looking at mens’ clothing.

“I will be fine. Let us pick a time and meet up then.”

“But...”

“Oh, Kisshouin-san?”



“Eh?”

The owner of the voiced was revealed to be Enjou, who entered the store with a group of boys.

“Enjou-sama!” the girls cried.

Enjou walked our way as his sudden appearance caused a few whispered squeals among the girls.

“What are you doing in a place like this, Kisshouin-san?”

“As you can see, I am shopping.”

“Ahh, a present for your oniisan.”

Ah-, hey!

Did he think Oniisama was the only person I had to gift mens’ clothing to!?

Dah, this bastard was looking down on me!

I know I’m unpopular, okay!? Damnit!

“No. In fact I have already bought my brother’s present while in London!”

“Ah, really?”

“Yes. The present I am picking now is for somebody else.”

Ohohohoho! Don’t think the Reika you know in Zui’ran is all there is to me.

“Hmmm.”

Enjou looked at me with an amused smile.

Kuh, don’t look into his eyes, Reika.

He’ll see through your bluff!

“Well what might *you* be doing here, Enjou-sama?”

“As you can see, I am shopping.”

Tsk.

So Enjou liked expensive brands, did he?

Now that I looked at him he was wearing a fashionable scarf right now.

This store was filled with the kind of elegant clothes that matched his style.

“Ah, umm, Enjou-sama,” began Kikuno-chan, “is Kaburagi-sama not with you?”

Enjou had come in with a group of boys, but we didn’t see Kaburagi amongst them.

“Hm? Masaya is busy with something else right now. We’re meeting up later.”

Enjou suddenly threw a glance my way.

Ah, touring the dessert shops with Wakaba-chan, huh?

According to Wakaba, this morning she would have gone to see the Palace of Versailles, just outside of Paris. Then, after lunch, she’d be hearing back this way, meaning that it was about time that she’d arrive.

It was a pretty long time, but then the Versaille was rather far away.

As the Rococo Queen it was a place I had to visit, but since shopping was our focus for today it was too far for us to consider.

Besides, everyone in the group had already been before.

Still, if time permitted I’d like to have gone.

“Oh, I know! Reika-sama, why don’t you ask Enjou-sama for advice!”

“Huh?”

What the heck are you saying, Ayame-chan!

“Advice?” Enjou inclined his head in question, still smiling gently.

“Yes! Reika-sama has been having a lot of trouble deciding on a gift souvenir. Do you think you could help her, Enjou-sama?”

Hey, come on now.

“My, that will not do, Ayama-san,” I chided. “Enjou-sama has his own...”

“If you’re alright with me, why not, Ojousama?” he interrupted me with a bright smile.

Geeeehhhhh!

I looked back and the girls were all cheering.

What the hell!?

The conversation just advanced without me!

“But Enjou-sama, your friends are...”

“They’re going to shop across the street, so it’s no problem if we split up.”

Uohh, is that so?

“Isn’t that great, Reika-sama!”

“Enjou-sama will know for sure what the best choice is!”

Ahhhh~ I mean, I guess that could be true... But it’s *Enjou*.

“Kisshouin-san, am I not good enough?” he wondered aloud.

Guh!

The way he said it would make me look like an ingrate if I turned him down now! So sneaky!

“...I will be in your care, then.”

Kuh, I lost...

But since the girls had been dreaming of spending time with Enjou today, I supposed I had no choice...

Or so I thought when they suddenly told me,

“Well then, we’ll be going to another store now~”

“Please take care of Reika-sama, Enjou-sama~”

and left me behind with strange smiles.

What the heck!?

“It looks like your friends are gone.”

“...So it seems.”

So mean...

“Well then, shall we find that present of yours?”

“...I suppose we shall.”

Mn, fine then!

Now that it had come to this I would at least make the best of Enjou’s good fashion sense.

“Do you have anything concrete in mind?” he asked me.

“No, nothing so specific. I am finding it hard to decide...” I admitted. “He would have his own taste in neckties, no?”

“He probably would,” he confirmed.

“But cufflinks and lapel pins are difficult to choose as well...”

“How old is he?” Enjou asked.

“The same age as Oniisama.”

Enjou hummed. “If it’s too difficult choosing clothing, then what if you bought him a business card holder, or a business card case?”

“I see!”

That was a good idea!

“The problem is that some people match them with their clothing line.”

“I see~”

It was quite possible, since this was Imari-sama we were talking about.

“You didn’t consult Takateru-san?”

“Oniisama was adamant that consumables would be best.”

“Ahaha, as expected of him.”

What was expected? Well, whatever.

“Hm, as far as other gifts that don’t need much thought, I guess there’s ball markers?”

“Ball markers?” I asked.

“In golf, there can be a lot of other players’ balls when you’re close to the flagstick. Since they roll around and get in the way, people place ball markers

down in their place until it's their turn to put," he explained to me.

Ohho~! That was an option too!?

I'd never tried golf, after all, and I didn't have much interest either, so I had no idea these things even existed!

"But if he is already playing golf, then would he not already have markers that he likes?"

It was fine if he'd never played it before, but if Imari-sama was golfing then he obviously had one.

"That's true, but you can have as many golf ball markers as you want, after all."

"Really?"

"Yeah. A lot of people just pick one based on their mood for the day. That's why they're like cufflinks."

"I see~!"

If people kept a lot of them then maybe they wouldn't be uncomfortable being gifted one more.

"In that case, might it be fine even if there is a problem with his taste?"

"Ahaha! Don't you have any confidence in your taste, Kisshouin-san? Well, should be fine though. Fashionable people often pick the most unique designs for their markers, after all."

"Ah, I see! As a bit of a joke!"

This had a low hurdle!

It was settled then! My present to Imari-sama would be a ball marker!

Aaah! Then in that case shouldn't I have looked for one in England!?

Golf was British!

What an oversight!

I wanted to go back now!

Bring me back to England right this moment!

“What’s wrong? You suddenly look down.”

“...I wish I had known about these golf ball markers back in London.”

“Ah, is that how it is? But I don’t think it matters, you know? Paris has some brands that are pretty famous for golf wear too, but he might appreciate it more if you pick him a brand he doesn’t know. Something he wouldn’t usually think to use.”

“I see!”

Enjou was full of good advice!

Alright, in that case I’d buy any golf ball markers that caught my eye in Paris and Rome, and then at the end I’d give the best one to Imari-sama.

Then the rest could go to Otousama.

Naturally I needed to find some for Oniisama too.

This store was using ball markers as decorations. Oho, cute.

I’d better check some other stores too.

But thank goodness.

With this, I’d addressed my biggest worry.

For once, I was grateful to Enjou.

“Enjou-sama, thank you very much for your wonderful advice.”

“You’re very welcome. It’s an honour to have been of use to you.”

Unexpectedly, Enjou might be a pretty good guy!

We smiled at each other.

Still smiling, Enjou placed his hand on my shoulder.

Hm?

“No need to feel indebted to me, okay, Kisshouin-san?”

He was telling me I was indebted to him...!

\*

\*

\*

Enjou left to meet Kaburagi, while I went on that boat tour down the Seine that we agreed on in London.

And it was a stylish sunset cruise, no less! So dreamy!

Unfortunately we were surrounded by couples.

Ah-, those two were from Zui'ran! And they were holding hands! Didn't they know that boys were supposed to keep a polite distance after seven!?

Ah-, and that foreigner couple were kissing right now! What did they take public decency for!? ...So jealous.

...I suddenly remembered something that I heard once. That being surrounded by girl friends with no boyfriends would make it so that you'd never find one either.

Wasn't that my situation right now?

Maybe I was unpopular because I was surrounded by unpopular girls...

"This is so fun, Reika-sama! Going on a cruise was the right choice!" Ayame-chan exclaimed with a smile next to me.

Uugh!

What on earth was I thinking!?

Wasn't it fine to have unpopular friends?

We were on this cruise because I said I wanted to go on one, and we ate those fish and chips because I said I wanted to try some.

Serika-chan even turned into the Phantom for me.

Right! Friends before romance!

We weren't unpopular, we just prioritised our friendships over anything else.

It's not that boys didn't want us, but that we were staying away from boys.

Right.

On another note though, while cruising down the Seine was wonderful and all, it was a little cold doing this in May...